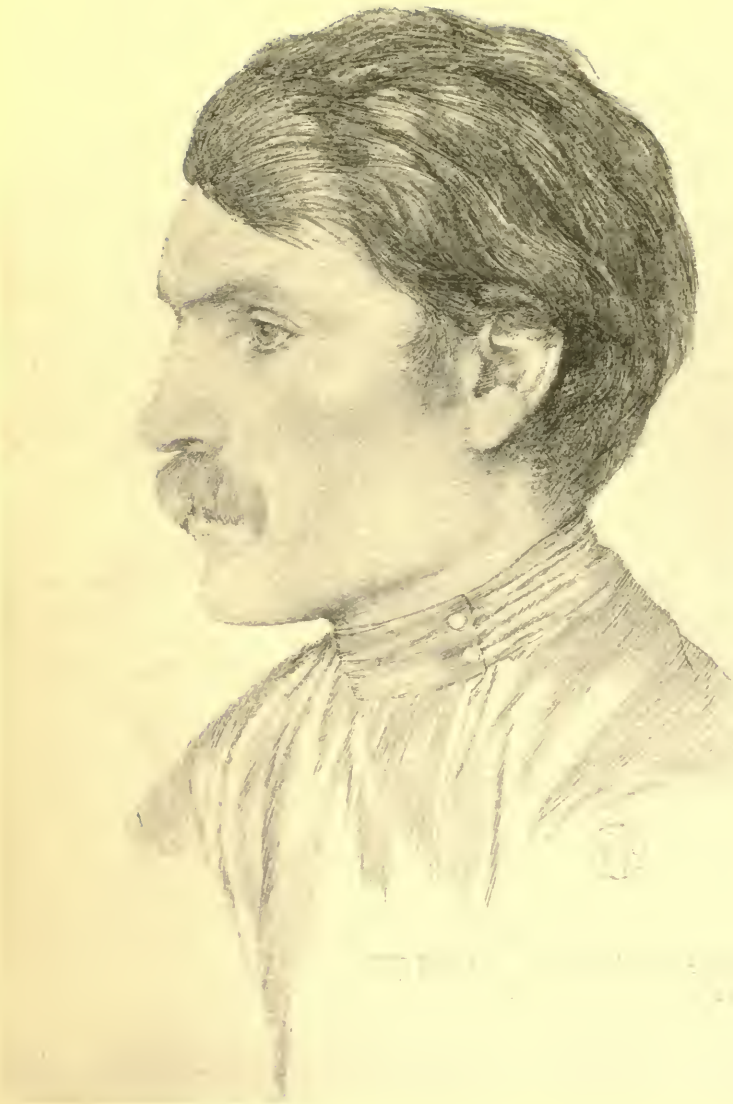
CHANGING RUSSIA

BY STEPHEN GRAHAM



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BY STEPHEN GRAHAM

WITH 15 ILLUSTRATIONS & A MAP

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S. G.

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CONTENTS

PAGE

RUSSIA OF THE HOUR 1

ROSTOF-ON-THE-DON 17

THE TRAMP TO BATUM:

I. AWAY TO THE COUNTRY 33

II. ON THE ROAD 37

III. AT THE SEASIDE IN RUSSIA 41

IV. FLOWERS AND FRUIT 46

V. ALONG THE TOBACCO PLANTATIONS . . . 49

VI. COLONISATION AND POLITICS 59

VII. A COLONIST FAMILY 65

VIII. TUAPSE 70

IX. THE OLD CRONE AND THE MOUNTAINS . . . 74

X. MANY MEETINGS 77

XI. SOTCHI 87

XII. THE RUNAWAY SAILOR 91

XIII. RUSSIAN JOURNALISM 98

XIV. GAGRI 112

XV. THE LOWER INTELLIGENTIA 116

XVI. HOPE FOR A NEW NATIONAL ART 124

XVII. WHAT THE MONKS THINK 130

XVIII. RUSSIAN IMPERIAL POLICY 138

XIX. ADVENTURES IN ABKHASIA 143

PAGE

A TRAMP TO BATUM: *continued.*

XX. GUDAÖUT 152
XXI. NOVY AFON 158
XXII. SUKHUM 164
XXIII. ONE OF THE HIGHER INTELLIGENTIA . . . 168
XXIV. FORDING A WIDE RIVER 180
XXV. OTCHEMCHIRI 188
XXVI. WHAT IS MALARIA? 191
XXVII. THE ROAD TO POTI 195
XXVIII. POTI 202
XXIX. REFLECTIONS AT BATUM 206
XXX. THE DEVIL'S CRADLE 214
XXXI. LOOSHA 225

URAL SKETCHES:

I. TRAVELLING THIRD CLASS 237
II. BY THE SIDE OF A URAL LAKE 254
III. THE BURDEN 260
IV. AMONG THE URAL GOLD-DIGGERS 263
V. JOURNEY TO KISHTIM FACTORY 271
VI. ELECTING THE FOURTH DUMA 281
VII. GOOD-BYE TO THE LAKE 285

IN THE CRIMEA 289

POSTSCRIPT: THE BALKAN WAR 302

INDEX 305

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

PORTRAIT OF THE AUTHOR (*from a pencil drawing by* VERNON HILL) . . . . . *Frontispiece*

FACING PAGE

THE GREAT SOUTH ROAD (BETWEEN PILENKI AND GAGRI) . 34

(*a*) A TYPICAL DATCHA, GELENDZHIK. (*b*) THE SANDS OF GELENDZHIK 44

THE ROAD ABOVE SOTCHI 90

(*a*) KRASNAYA POLYANA. (*b*) THE FERRY AT ADLER . . 96

THE SWALLOW'S NEST: A ROCK OF MANY PICNICS . . 108

(*a*) THE DONKEY-TRAM WITH LETTER-BOX ATTACHED. (*b*) NEAR PILENKI: A PLEASANT SPOT FOR REPOSING AND WRITING 114

THE CHURCH AT GAGRI 124

THE SOUTHERN NIGHT 182

GAGRI 190

YALTA 290

THE CRIMEAN COAST 298

MAP OF RUSSIA 240

THE RUSSIA OF THE HOUR

CHANGING RUSSIA

THE RUSSIA OF THE HOUR

RUSSIA is becoming more interesting to England every day. I should like to point out how and why.

We are interested in the mediæval state of the Russian civilisation and in the religious life of the peasantry, in which it is possible to see something of what we ourselves were like in the far past.

We are interested by Russian art, thought, and action as compared with ours—in the alluring contrast of life as shown in Russian novels.

We look to the Russians for new sources of pleasure. Their music and dancing, and to a certain extent their literature, have gratified our æsthetic taste. We are now beginning to look to the Russian theatre to infuse new life into ours.

We are uninterested in Germany, as a schoolboy is uninterested in the rod with which he may be chastised—uninterested in France, who is like a seedy old partner whom we have grown up beside, and whom we know in and out. So Russia waits to us with all the freshness and allurement of newly discovered country.

Russia puzzles us. In comparing ourselves with other nations, we are trying to understand why we British lost our self-esteem and self-sureness over the

South African War, whilst the Russians, so soundly beaten by Japan, have emerged from their humiliation as self-assertive and courageous as if they had become thereby dictators of Europe.

We are wondering what Russia will do next in China, Persia, and Turkey, especially in Turkey and in support of the Slav nations.

We think that Russia is the new America which we propose to develop with our capital, becoming millionaires thereby. It is for some, even for many, the land where money is invested, the place where the treasure is. This perhaps is the most important reason of all.

There have been several happenings in the past year of great international interest. More has been written about Russia than ever before, especially in the Liberal press.

There has been the Persia trouble; the agreements of diplomatists, not finding favour in the public eye, have only leaked out as secrecy became something that must be broken by material results. We have felt that Persia had really been partitioned between Britain and Russia by the diplomatists acting for these countries, and that only on the agitation in the press depended the suspension of unpopular action. Mr. Morgan Shuster, a picturesque figure, stood for a moment thwarting the whole desire of the Tsar, and if he had remained he would have been backed by an immense amount of sympathy. It was, however, too uneven a game of chess—white playing with a few pawns against black's full board. Shuster was beaten, and retired to England and America to help agitators and to write. Russia does not seem to have been retarded much by agitation.

There arose the question of the Trans-Persian

Railway to India. By accounts in the press, it seemed to be taken as a settled affair, a common-sense project of the modern commercial world, shortening the journey to India by ten days. Persia's right not to have a railway if she didn't want it, wasn't even mentioned. But after the last German scare the idea was put into the air that the railway was only useful to Russia as a base from which to conquer India—a deplorable idea, considering that Russia is our friend, a cowardly one considering the weakness of Russia as a military power.

After the wild excitement of the German scare, the mad funk of German arms, many cried out, "What is the use of our unnatural *entente* with France and Russia? Let us desert them, and make strong Germany our friend. Then we can face the world equal to all comers."

Scarcely had this doctrine been promulgated when Russia was suspected of being secretly the friend of Germany all the while, of "having a look-in at Potsdam" whenever she pleased. We were told that Russia had a compact with Germany never to take the field against her—which is possibly true. The Tsar has undoubtedly said to the Kaiser, as absolute monarch to absolute monarch, "Whatever happens, we will never fight *against* you." When the English delegation of M.P.'s and others was being entertained at St. Petersburg one dear old military-minded Englishman proposed the toast of the Russian army, saying he looked forward to the day when Briton and Russ would be fighting shoulder to shoulder against the common foe, and his speech was received with blank silence. He had made an unfortunate blunder.

There was that delegation of M.P.'s and others

received with extraordinary brilliancy in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The delegation, though not representative, was extremely influential. It was taken merely as a matter of an exchange of hospitality in England, and though some words were said grudgingly about arranging for the Trans-Persian Railway, it was generally felt that the visit was only one for the promotion of friendship. The pretext of the proposed unification of English and Russian Churches was not taken seriously by the authorities in either country. But of course many things happened as a result of the visit if we could but know.

To return to our chronicle; there was the Maleçka case. An English subject was charged, according to the *Daily News*, with holding a revolutionary opinion, but in reality, as far as can be made out, for aiding and abetting the escape of the revolutionary Filipovitz —no one can possibly be tried for holding a revolutionary opinion. The case was certainly very important, as it was likely to form a precedent for the treatment of English people in Russia. Anyone is liable to arrest in Russia at any moment of the day or night at the instance of a corrupt or stupid police. An Englishman is entitled to the protection of his Government, and it is very important to all of us that the Minister of Foreign Affairs act boldly and clearly in any case of arrest. Rather than allow a British subject, even the meanest, to be imprisoned by a foreign power unjustly or without trial, the Government ought to be prepared even to go to war. In this case it was asserted far and wide that Miss Maleçka was a British subject arrested in Russia merely for holding an opinion and condemned to many years' penal servitude. It took weeks of agita-

tion by Miss Maleçka's influential friends before any serious attention was given to the question.

Miss Maleçka was pardoned, and the affair was mysteriously hushed up. At the height of the agitation an article appeared in the *Westminster Gazette* from the mysterious hand of Mme. Novikof, plainly hinting that the best course for Miss Maleçka's advisers was to present a petition to the Tsar for a reprieve. This was done, and international interference was foregone. In the words of Mme. Novikof, the Tsar received the petition, and he said: "Otpravte yéo of Anglü" ("Dispatch her to England"). Miss Maleçka came back, and not a word more was said. But Englishmen need to know something more, and for their own personal protection in the future they have a right to know it.

"For what crime was she tried?"

If she was really guilty of a crime as we understand it, then her complete pardon is an absurdity. Certainly we do not ask of Russia the forgiveness of a real criminal any more than Russia could possibly ask us to forgive her "Peter the Painter" of Sidney Street memory. The facts of the affair ought to have been laid before the House of Commons; they were worth more to us than the remission of the sentence. If the facts had not warranted the sentence, we could have obtained its remission through our national right, enforced by the power of our strong right arm: if they did warrant it, then why did we insult Russia, and why was the lady pardoned?

Another event of considerable interest was the massacre of the workmen on strike at the Lena goldfields in Siberia. An English company, taking the usual advantage of the cheap labour available in

Russia, got on to bad terms with its workmen, most of whom were already somewhat debauched through the evil results of a gold-mining life. When the workmen went on strike for better conditions of employment and came in procession to the works, the manager allowed the settlement to rest in the hands of the typical Russian bully who had charge of the soldiery on guard. The result was the decimation of the peaceful crowd of peasants and workmen by several volleys fired into them at the orders of the bully. There was an uproar in Russia. The English company was blamed; the Government was blamed. Many people demanded that no more commercial concessions be given to foreign companies. The officer who gave the order to fire was arrested, and is to be brought to trial, and the whole affair is to be thrashed out by a Commission.

All these questions and events, and more besides, have interested both nations, and they have their significances for those who can read the signs of the times. But probably one feature of international interest that has escaped the attention of most people during the past year is more important than all. I refer to the steady flow of British capital into Russia. I had almost said the great rush of British capital thither.

The benefits of the *entente cordiale* seem to be shared in this way—military and diplomatic concessions for Russia; financial and commercial concessions for Britain.

Money has been forthcoming from Britain for all manner of projects—for Caucasian oil, Ural gold, copper and platinum, new railways, old railways, for making harbours and reconstructing towns, for

trams, &c. &c. One of the tangible results of the visit of the English delegates was the purchase of the whole stock of two Russian home railways. Various other schemes were promoted. Moscow, Nikolaef, and Baku have raised money in London. Money has been found for the new railway along the Black Sea shore, and for the railway from Vladikavkaz to Tiflis.

It is not simply a political party-cry that capital is being "driven" out of England. Capital goes to the land that makes biggest return for it; and Russia, with its undeveloped wealth, its cheap labour market, and timber, has great advantages over Great Britain as a field of investment.

All the while the English labourers were winning their victories by going on strike and ceasing work, the Russians were developing and working, and taking without ever a set-back. People with money to invest fought shy of British industrial concerns, and more gladly gave their money to Russian enterprises where the workmen take but a shilling or eighteenpence a day, and are content with any conditions. Again, the onslaught on landed property in the political campaign of the Budget, and in the propagandism of the Land League, the scaring talk of the "single tax," has all been a warning to those who have large holdings of land. Land is selling freely for gold, and the gold is going into something safer—Russian industrialism.

England is no longer an island, land surrounded by water, for our solid substance is ceasing to be land, and is becoming gold.

Where a man's treasure is, there will his heart be also. Where his treasure is, there is his dearest interest, there is his country, I am afraid. There is

therefore a danger in the air through the shifting of the centre of attraction.

One thing is certain. The victories of the English working-man tend to develop Russian commerce, and indeed commerce in every other country where labour is cheap and Governmental requirements low. If English labour is going to defend itself permanently, it must develop a virile foreign policy. It must be ready to interfere in the domestic affairs of other countries, and impose its laws not only on the employer in England but on the employer throughout the world. Or the workman with his barren victories will go to the wall. For there are "blackleg" nations as well as "blackleg" workmen; strike-breaking nations that are far more dangerous than private strike-breakers. I am speaking for the moment from the English workman's point of view. It would be unjust and unkind to call the Russians a "blackleg" nation, for they act with no *malice prepense;* they don't understand the situation, and they stand as a people to lose spiritually even more than we do.

To the man who knows the Russian peasantry in its simplicity and purity far away from commercial regions, there can be but one thought at the prospect of its life when it is called into a fierce industrialism, illiterate, unprotected. The story of Yourghis[1] going with his family to Chicago may be the story of Ivan Ivanovitch in the next hundred years—only Chicago will not be across the ocean, it will be at his own door.

. . . . . .

In *Undiscovered Russia* I tried to give an account of this peasantry, and the idea underlying its

[1] Vide *The Jungle*, by Upton Sinclair.

simple religious life. I feel now that the book is like a timely painting made of some one we love, not long before death. When next the painter offers to paint her, the time will be past, and the loved one be departed. Often I am tempted to imagine that I shall come back to Russia some day after ten years' absence, and find there nothing that I knew before—the whole tone and aspect of the country changed.

The hope lies in the Tsar and his advisers, who are all Conservatives, that they truly conserve and keep the peasantry living simply and sweetly on the land, that they will not make any more commercial concessions when once the present pecuniary needs are satisfied.

Of course if the Tsar and his advisers are not wise enough to save their people from commercialism, they will certainly bring ruin on their own heads. Every peasant brought into a factory or a mine or a railway is one man subtracted from the forces of the Tsar, and one added to the social revolutionary party. Conditions of the employment of labour are so bad that they preach in themselves without books and pamphlets. Not all the skill and courage, brutality and diplomacy of the officials will stem the flood. Russian workmen combine more readily than English, have less care of their skins, less regard of consequences. They are only kept in check by the tremendous odds at present against them. Once they gain a numerical superiority, they will carry all before them and perhaps drown the throne in blood. There is a lust for blood in Russia that must make all Europe stand aghast when it finds expression.

I might say a word of the intellectual movement, and the revolutionary movement just past, but it is

quelled, discredited, and forgotten. When next there is an outbreak against the Tsardom, it will wear a different complexion. Intellectualism will have disappeared, and the passions of the mob will guide all as far as there can be guidance. The commercial centres of Russia are already infested with drunken hooligan mobs only waiting for a chance to murder and pillage. They are to a certain extent the old abettors of the police, the touch-paper of the pogrom; when next they get a-going not even the soldiery will stop them.

What of the Church? In the past it has been powerful to hold and restrain. The Church is preparing to enter upon an immense political campaign; it reckoned to obtain a *bloc* of one hundred submissive members in the new Duma, it is running its own candidates and feels very confident of success. The Church will thereby coin its peasant adherents into political power. It is, however, a questionable policy, being in opposition to the traditional ideas of the Church. The priests have been opposed to Parliament from the beginning, and their attitude was explicable; they believed that they themselves were the representatives of the people. But what do they believe now? Formerly they took it for granted. They preached the doctrine, and do still, that the peasants' world is in his own village, and that the government of his land is well entrusted to the hands of his little-father the Tsar and his eternal Father, God. But now the priests have gone to the country to preach Western ideas, asking for votes, and the peasant who reminds the priest of the early traditions of the Church is to be told that "they didn't know everything down in Judee." This is perhaps

one of the most astonishing phenomena of the Russia of to-day.

This book, *Changing Russia*, I have written with an eye to the ways and thoughts of the Intelligentia. It is a journal of a tramp along the way where the new Black Sea Railway is to be built, of a vagabondage in the Urals, and a walk in the Crimea. I have ruled out of the account of my experiences much that was personal, and much that related to Holy Russia, as not of interest here. The study is therefore of the Russia of the hour, that which changes even as I write; of a land about to receive commercial development; of the educated and moneyed Russians who are to be seen at the resorts of the Caucasian shore; and of the miscellaneous literary, artistic, and social issues which show the present state and direction of Russian culture. It is hoped that it will help the reader to fill in the picture of the Russia of to-day. It seems I have said enough to show that a knowledge of the Russian situation is of vital importance to us all.

ROSTOF-ON-THE-DON

ROSTOF-ON-THE-DON

I

THE autumn breezes rushing over five hundred miles of parched steppe come puffing in my face with their welcome messages of change. The aspen leaves are wilted and heavy, the acacias are all yellow, and the thousands of hollyhocks that grow wild on every bank are fading and shrinking. Clouds of dust rush along the roadway—"where it all comes from, God only knows," as the peasant would say, though perhaps its quantity is little marvel when the grass of the plains is so burned and brittle that when you tread upon it, it turns to powder and beats up like smoke at each turn of the foot. It is impossible to sleep with an open window at night for the dirt that would be blown in, and occasionally the dust storm drives us in even from the verandah. It is not cold: there will not be frost for two months. Indeed it is very hot, and each day the sun shines out of the broad blank sky of the steppes. I am sitting on the broad, sheltered, green-painted verandah of a white house at Nakhitchevan on the Don, two miles from Rostof. I arrived here some days ago after a thousand-mile train journey in Russia. Olga Matvievna is my hostess; I became acquainted with her and her family in another town some years back, and her house is one of those in Russia where I can always reckon on a room if I want it. To stay in Nakhitchevan and not at Olga's would be something

like an insult. Even to use my own sheets and my own towels would be considered not in good part. It is difficult for an English person who has not been in Russia to understand that Russian hospitality is such. I, for my part, know now that to deny a Russian the chance to be hospitable to you is to deny him a place in your heart; to refuse from him tremendous helpings at his table, to expostulate over the broaching of a new bottle of wine, to say you can't receive his gifts, is actually like saying, "I'm sorry to hurt you, but you aren't really worthy to do me this honour."

Perhaps there is no need to protest so much here. I have only come for a few days before taking to the road to make a long tramp south to the Turkish frontier. It is certain I shall go. Even Olga knows that, for she knows the English temperament. "The English," she often says, "always know in advance what they are going to do, and they do it." The Russian never knows. He makes his plans, but he never obeys them. Nothing in Russia is ever done by cold design, unless it be by Jews and Germans. The whole of Russian history is a story of accidents. That is perhaps an exaggeration, but it points to the truth. Often a young man comes a-visiting in Russia for a few days, and he stays twenty years. Anyone who has read Turgenev's *Rudin* knows the type.

I am accommodated in George's room—he is a rheumatic cripple now away in the country—over my head at night gleams the ikon of St. George the Victory-bringer. Opposite me on the wall hangs a life-size enlarged portrait of his father and mother, a simple couple, and they look down on me benevolently and sweetly as if I were their own child. The good old pair are still alive, but they also are away in the

country at one of their little cottages. Every morning the samovar is set up in the verandah ; we have tea or coffee and hot boobliks, and we talk, talk endlessly.

Yesterday I remarked to Olga how well the boobliks were made here, and it caused her to tell me an interesting tale. The booblik is a ring-shaped roll no fatter than a middle finger ; it is slightly sweet, is crusty, and turns soft, and may be buttered after it has stood five minutes on the chimney of the samovar. I should add, it is no bigger round than a muffin. This is the tale.

The rather sweet-looking plump Marfa, wife of clumsy Dmitri the door-keeper, lately brought a baby into the world, her fifth—the other four all died successively about a week after birth. The woman is a rather feckless creature ; she loves her child and wants him to live, but apparently her maternal instinct is slight. When she went to the hospital no one knew what was the matter with her, and when she returned in a cab the day after the baby was born and brought the child with her, there was general astonishment in the household.

"Why did you come back so soon?" asked Olga.

"It is better here," the woman replied. "I'll work again, but if necessary I can rest."

"And the child?"

"The child, mistress, will die. The others have died, and he will die also. It is God's will."

There seemed a certain fatality about the matter, and though the baby was a healthy-looking boy, the mother felt as if he were doomed in advance. Olga determined to save the child. She understands the management of children, and has done so ever since she learnt to wash and swathe the babies of the

wretched peasant women of the famine-stricken districts some twenty years ago. The mother stood aside. Olga looked after the child, washed it herself every day, and saw that the mother fed it properly. The result was that the child made splendid progress, and looked as far from death as it is possible to be. The mother believed in her mistress's power and skill and prayers, and she would not even wash the child herself. Olga was tied to Nakhitchevan. It was impossible for her to leave the baby, for the mother was convinced that once she left it all hope was lost—the baby would die as the others had done before him.

It was necessary for Olga to go to Kiev to help her brother Ivan to decide which of two women he loved. When she came back, five days later, little Alexander had altogether changed for the worse. Olga averred he had not been looked after properly—he was pale and feeble-looking, and obviously neglected. What is more, it was noticed that his right leg never lay straight and that his back seemed curved. Olga reproved the servant passionately, and took the child under her care once more, washing and swathing it in the way these things should be done. But not by swathing could the leg be brought to lie straight. Olga therefore dosed him, for she has a great cupboard full of homœopathic medicines, and knows a remedy for every distemper to which the flesh is heir.

Poor little Alexander! He did not thrive, he did not endorse Olga's theories of homœopathy, but refused to eat, lay more uncomfortably in his cradle than ever, and looked rather yellow. The dark gleaner seemed waiting for him.

But he was cured, and this brings me to the boob-

lik. On the Festival of Our Lady of Kiev, Marfa's aunt, Prascovia, came up from the country, and the baby was referred to her. She looked at him for some time and then pronounced her verdict, "Bathing, swathing, homœopathy—all that is nonsense. It has nothing to do with these things. Someone of dark complexion has looked upon him with the evil eye."

What did Aunt Prascovia do? She baked an immense booblik, and whilst it was in dough—that is, before it was baked—the old woman passed the naked Alexander through it three times in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. That done, the booblik was put in the oven. The baby was taken and washed in a mixture of charcoal ash and holy water. When the booblik was cooked, it was given to a black dog to eat. And from that day Sasha began to improve, and now he is quite well. Yes, it seems pretty certain that Marfa is to keep this child and be proud of him.

"*We* couldn't cure him," said Olga; "wasn't it strange? He seemed to be cured by a superstition."

"By a superstition of the peasantry, not by a superstition of the Intelligentia," I replied, with a smile. It was a matter of jest between us that I hadn't much faith in homœopathy.

. . . . . .

Olga, her brothers, her father and mother, were all Russian Liberals, and read the *Russkoe Slovo*, a paper corresponding to the *Daily Chronicle*, as opposed to the *Russky Vedimosty*, which approximates to the *Daily News*. To them the *Russky Vedimosty* was too literary and thoughtful. Its news was gravely and decorously printed; it had too many

weighty articles, too little sentiment and gossip. The *Russkoe Slovo*, with its bold black headlines and its sentimental topical articles, all signed by popular names, just suited them. The family hero was Mr. Lloyd George, whose triumphs and whose speeches the *Slovo* gladly recorded. They believed in the dream of Progress and the building of the New Jerusalem, and in remedies applied externally to the body politic, with the same naïve enthusiasm as they believed in homœopathic medicine. They understood and approved the removing of the slums and of material slum conditions; but they took no account of the slums of intellect and will, of the slum conditions of man's mind and soul and morality in the offices and homes where the vast middle class works and lives. They imagined also that the abrogation of the Lords' Veto by the bill of 1911 was a matter of great festivity in England, for they could picture the behaviour of the people of the Russian towns if such a Liberal success were gained in St. Petersburg—the beflagging of the houses, the thronging of happy "mafficking" people in the streets. Of the great English strikes they took no stock whatever, and could form no opinion. They couldn't understand that discontent was greater among the masses of the people of England than among the masses of Russia; that the lot of a commercialised and enslaved people is harder than that of a little-commercialised though official-ridden one. They approved of the Suffragists—that is, of the militant party, for they never heard of any other—but they refused to think that the Liberal Government was really opposed to the granting of the suffrage. No Liberal Government in Russia would stand a chance against a campaign

such as the women have worked up in England. They thought the denial of the suffrage due to Conservative obstruction.

"Just think," I said to Olga, "the Suffragists in all these years of fanatical enthusiasm have killed nobody—have not even wounded anybody."

"Impossible!" said she.

"A fact, though."

Olga waved her hand in despair. "It's like a great game of hide-and-seek," said she. "If there had been Russians in it, your Cabinet would have been differently composed to-day."

"One or two celebrities would have been removed," I hazarded.

She smiled.

"What sort of punishment do you think would be meted out to the assassins?" I asked.

She paused a moment. "Penal servitude, I suppose," she said at last pathetically. "You imprison them now for hide-and-seek."

"I'm afraid they'd be hanged," I urged. "Surely you couldn't approve of assassination in any circumstances, could you?"

"Oh, no; it's not right to take human life unless the victim has been judged by a tribunal first and then given notice, given a chance before the sentence is carried out."

A month later, as I heard, the family were "not sorry" at the death of Stolypin, and Olga read the story of the execution and funeral of the assassin aloud to the family from the *Russkoe Slovo*, and shed tears of sorrow.

Yet Grigory Grigorievitch would not have voted for an Anarchist, nor would he have voted for

shedding blood. He is a simple Liberal—a kindly, little-thinking party man. He and his like are ready waiting to swamp the Russian intelligentia, the readers of the *Russky Vedimosty*—let Russia but have a British Constitution. But of course in that case, who would swamp both the intelligentia and the simple Liberals would be the peasantry.

But enough of politics for the time being. I'm afraid they will never put right the horrible town of Rostof.

II

Rostof shows what Russia is going to be if it follows along the commercial lines of the rest of Europe: in such towns lies the foundation of what is called "democracy," but which is really "making bricks in Egypt," and quarrelling over the hours and the wage. It is a large commercial city, growing at great velocity despite the reactionary force of the Government. Its position is one of immense commercial advantage, and had it been in the hands of Americans, and not of Russians, it would have been as great a town as Glasgow. As it is, it must in the course of the next twenty years go ahead of Odessa and Kiev, and take its place as third in size in the Russian Empire—third in size, but of course not third in importance in the eyes of the Government. Even now Rostof, with its three hundred thousand inhabitants, is slighted and passed over in favour of its little neighbour, Novocherkask, with ten thousand. Rostof is even printed in official maps in small italics, as we should indicate, say, Ongar or Chislehurst; and Novocherkask, with its wild population of loyal Cossacks of the Don, takes bold capitals like St. Petersburg or

Moscow. What heartburning there is at Rostof about the favours conferred on Novocherkask!

Rostof stands at the estuary of the Don, at the north of the Sea of Azof. The harbour needs clearing of sand, for no ship of large dimensions can come within sight of the city. Boats, however, arrive from the Black Sea ports, from Constantinople and beyond; and great quantities of grain are exported, though the trade is but poorly developed as yet. The chief source of prosperity, and that which gives to Rostof its type of commercial complexion, is the import of agricultural machinery, in which matter, with the possible exception of Marseilles, Rostof is the first port in the world. Practically all the agricultural machinery used in Russia comes through Rostof-on-the-Don, and, as Russia is the greatest grainfield in the world, the possibilities of that trade may be imagined. My first impression on coming to Rostof was that there were more English and American shops than Russian; one sees everywhere such names as Clayton and Shuttleworth, Sadler, John Martin and Co., Palmer Graham & Co. The main street is an "emporium" of steam-ploughs, harvesting machines, threshing machines, cranes, fire-engines, butter-factory machinery, and the rest, all imported from abroad and taxed at so much the pound weight. One journeys from the station between two galleries of hoardings advertising the wares of pushing foreign firms. There is not a single Russian firm in the business, be it remarked; the Russians who have shops in Rostof are purely of the domestic or valet order; they are content to be grocers and barbers. The machines of course cost far too much, and they are too expensive to be used in justice. They cost so much that Russian

grain should be sold at double its present price. Russia is therefore only able to compete in the European market by paying agricultural labourers one-half their due wages. As if Russians even paid them as much as their due half! They couldn't afford to do that, for those in authority are so awkward and careless in manipulation that they fail to get even half value out of their foreign machines. The best work done in Russia is still that done by the hand plough and the sickle.

That is by the way. Rostof is a place of shops. It stretches out its long railway arms to Europe, to the Black Sea and the Caspian, and brings them back full of luxuries. From a hundred provincial towns, the socially ambitious journey thither to buy Tottenham Court Road furniture, Sheffield cutlery, Persian rugs, Caucasian silks, Turkish fruits and sweetmeats, English and German clothes. It is also a place of amusement. It has a theatre to which Moscow and St. Petersburg companies are sometimes induced to come at a goodly price; it has an expensive restaurant music-hall open all night, a dozen or so electric theatres, and it has public gardens, with a band. It has free libraries, good baths, skating rinks, and ponds, with rowing boats. There are trips up country on Don steamers. Along the main street climbs an avenue of poplars and aspens. Soon the town is adding to itself at least a score of immense white stone buildings—public works, a university, &c. On the whole, it counts itself a fine town.

On the spiritual side it must be mentioned that the city has two immense maimed cathedrals, imitations of St. Basil and St. Saviour at Moscow, put up at the cost of several millions of roubles, but

shamefully scamped by the building contractors. The high cream-coloured building that is an imitation of the wonderful St. Saviour's at Moscow is an ugly thing set up in the name of God; the little axe-carved wooden chapel of North Russia is worth more to the religious heart, though it cost no money to build. Every Rostovian of taste talks of how the engineers and architects and agents stole the money, so that the grand plan of the church could not be carried out as originally intended. But it is not scandal that such a building should evoke, but the rage that would pull it down. The imitation of St. Basil is not so bad, for its original plan was less ambitious, but it also is an abomination, an ill-balanced, irrelevant-looking collection of coloured bricks. The originals at Moscow *live;* they grow out of the heart of the earth like flowers. These have no more pretence to life than the London electric theatres. It will be observed the bourgeois built the churches, not the peasants. They will do what is called "better" later. The Russian bourgeois has not yet evolved the "good taste" that the Western-European substitutes for creative-imaginativeness, but he will.

The churches of Rostof and Nakhitchevan are by no means sufficient to hold the inhabitants as are the churches of old-world Russian towns. Therein is to be seen the tendency towards the state of the towns of other countries. But still many people go to church, and even those who think they do not believe in religion, but who in reality simply don't know what religion is, observe the Church festivals, and pay priests to come in and bless their Easter tables, &c. On the eve of great festivals the churches are packed, there is wonderful singing, and those who

go then generally ask themselves why they do not go more often, "the singing is so good—better than at concerts where one pays to go in."

The electric theatres do a most extraordinary business, and the people of Rostof take more interest in the programmes than any one dreams of in England. The items at these shows are bloodthirsty, gruesome murder stories, stories of crime, of unfaithful husbands and wives, and of course the usual insane harlequinades. The young men and women discuss these imported horrors—they are nearly all of French origin—as if they represented real life, and are much more interested in *The Horrors of Life* and *The Husband's Revenge* than in the works of Tolstoy, Dostoievsky and Chekhof by which Russia is famous. I may say in passing, there are two miserable bookshops in Rostof, and at one of them there are no Dostoievskys for sale at all, and at the other it is only possible to buy complete editions, though at every kiosk and cigarette stall penny dreadfuls and twopenny translations and abridgments of foreign novels and plays are exhibited for sale. And what Rostof does to-day, Russia will be doing to-morrow.

There is plenty of work in Rostof—and money for it. Food is dear, but no one need starve. There is always a demand for dock labourers, railwaymen, and factory hands. Women find work easily in office and workshop. Among the learned professions, lawyers, doctors, and engineers make fortunes on circumlocution, venereal disease, and palm oil. Among the wealthy and the middle classes card-playing for money is as it was in London in the reign of George the Third, and where there are no cards there is vodka.

The streets at night are full of what would generally be called rabble, all talking nonsense and surging from one glaring electric theatre to another. The trams, owned by a Belgian company, are overrun with thieves to such an extent that a woman travelling with a little handbag can almost calculate on its being opened as she stands sandwiched in the crowd of passengers.

Olga, asked what she thought of Rostof, dismissed it with a wave of her hand. "*A hooliganskу gorod*," said she—"a town of hooligans." I asked her father also, the good simple Liberal, what he made of it; "*Narod isporchen*," said he—"the people are spoiled." Both comments were true.

"Yet," said I, "we have towns in England and America not unlike Rostof. You in Russia are only beginning to have such towns."

In Rostof, however, there is a passion towards England. English is taught in many schools, and is more in demand than French or German. The presence of so many British firms is an advertisement of all things English. When the British Parliamentary delegates failed to come to the town, there was considerable disappointment. All that has succeeded in Rostof looks towards England and the West. That which has failed is never heard of but in heaven.

THE TRAMP TO BATUM

I

AWAY TO THE COUNTRY

HE who lived in town in the autumn of 1911 had a life largely made up of the topics of the hour; the Turco-Italian war, the German-English trouble, the strikes and political crises. I like to think that many in the din of London life had somewhere in their minds the feeling that all the while, far away somewhere, beyond the voices, was some happy valley, a little river running through the valley, and by the river some white stone cottage, another home; that all the while the important events were happening there was a refuge, a quiet happy place where nothing was important.

A mother I know used to say to her children, when they had been very noisy, and she felt foiled by life—"Oh, I will go away and leave you all. I will find a cottage somewhere." Of course she has never gone. She could not, very well.

"I will run away," says a woman, suddenly made desperate.

"To-morrow I will go," says the frustrate town-dweller, whispering to himself; "to-morrow I will go." . . .

Go where?

To *Innisfree*, to the happy valley lying somewhere waiting to receive him:

> "I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
> And live alone in the bee-loud glade."

And not the frustrate only. Even those whose places the world covets, the rich, the splendidly successful, the leading men, share this desire. Even Prime Ministers of the day, in their pitch of pride, say to themselves, "To-morrow I will slip off somewhere to the country and hide myself." The ambitious say it even in the heat of the chase. Kings say it often. We all say it. "O that I had wings like a dove, for then would I flee away and be at rest. Lo, then would I get me away far off and remain in the wilderness. I would make haste to escape."

It is the stillest thought; but potent, moving. Under its influence we behave strangely, astonish our friends, commit crimes even. We feel suddenly aware of our souls, of something the world says does not exist. We feel cheated, the victims of an immense conspiracy. We are suddenly *contra mundum*, and dream of spiting the world, or wreaking our vengeance upon it.

It is something much more than "the call of the wild," which has now become a cant expression. It is what is called being "driven into the wilderness." But it is more than that. It is saving grace. It is repentance and forgiveness, that, by virtue of which even in old age we may slip back into our boyhood and live as a little child. . . .

The mood passes, and we become once more good beasts of burden, obeying the whip and the bit; or the mood does not pass, and we realise that the desire is the pearl for the sake of which it is worth while sacrificing all else. Some step down from their thrones like Charles of Spain, or some, like Henry Ryecroft, worm themselves out at last, half-crushed, to bask in the sunshine half-a-dozen years before they

THE GREAT SOUTH ROAD (BETWEEN PILENKI AND GAGRI)

die. Some, like Tolstoy, only manage to break away on their death-eve.

The desire is voiced throughout all modern literature. It is the shout of anarchy in Russian tales, the low sob in the pages of Galsworthy, the suppressed breath of Zarathustra. It is the reason for the flight of Yourghis in *The Jungle;* it speaks as a song in the pilgrim's advice to Foma Gordyeef; its expression is the inspired chapter of Wells' *Modern Utopia.*

. . . . . .

I fled away in August 1911, and voted London's topics irrelevancies all. I had wanted to get away passionately, and on the last days before leaving London my eyes looked beyond all that was opaque and ugly to the sea, the silence, to the fresh breeze on the green hills. And this autumn was made up differently for me because I left the town. No walls, no streets that were stairs, no grey skies or grey faces—by the way, faces are just like skies, are they not, some grey and clouded, others sultry, and others, fresh and glorious like cloudless mornings?—no grey faces, no bowler hats and high collars, no ugly posters and trade pictures staring at my very heart like clowns or drunkards watching me with my love, no shrieking news-hawkers and shrieking placards, no picture-postcards shops, no music-halls, picture-palaces, gramophones, illustrated papers, and, last of all, no rushing eager jangling questions of the hour.

But instead, months by the sea; the nights spent under the calm and quiet stars, the days in the gaze of the true and glorious sun, the silences, the healing

of one's mind by nature, the changing step from the town measure to the step of nature, the changing of the rhythm of one's existence, and the re-entering into the orchestra of the universe. No questions of the hour; only the eternal questions.

II

ON THE ROAD

I AM sitting now in a cool spot hidden away from the hot bright day, and a cold noisy river is tumbling into the sea. The sky is resting on a tree-covered mountain, and from the summit to the brawling river at my feet is a wild tangle of loving vines. Here I ate my first wild grapes. A minute since, I boiled my kettle on a little wood fire and brewed my morning tea. With my bread and meat I had a bagful of grapes and blackberries. And as I ate, big crimson-thighed grasshoppers jumped over me, and heavy-winged swallow-tail butterflies floated around like sumptuously dressed women. I sipped my tea and ate my bread with as much abundance of leisure as there was abundance of sky over my head. Rostof, and even London, are both beautiful in that they led me here.

I did not stay long with my hospitable hostess at Nakhitchevan, for I had in view a long autumn tramp on the shore of the Black Sea to the Turkish frontier. I have it in my mind to join a band of Russian peasant pilgrims, and cross Asia Minor on foot in the winter. I am not, however, anxious about times and plans, and am content to prolong summer, tramping southward along one of the most beautiful roads of Europe, the highway from Novorossisk to Batum. I left Rostof the day before yesterday, and journeyed

to Novorossisk by train, passing by miles of sunflower fields, meadows, and orchards to the picturesque little port at the north-eastern corner of the Black Sea.

In preparation for my long vagabondage, I bought myself a bright blue peasant blouse and a broad belt; I wore the shabbiest pair of old black trousers, and an old brown Russian hat that had weathered many climes. I looked a vagabond. In the sack for my back were many pockets and calico bags. In these were bestowed all the things that must be kept clean, papers, books, towels, toilet items, photographic stuff; and in the body of the sack my kettle, a duplicate pair of boots, a sleeping rug. It was a formidable bundle on my back, and I felt weighed down like Christian under his sins. It looked so unhandy that children called out to me to give them a tune, thinking I was an itinerant musician carrying an organ.

"Look at that one carrying music on his back; ask him to give us a tune, Misha. Hi, Mister, give us a tune!"

I cannot say I felt very happy as I set out. Despite all the romance of the road, there is something very hard about the beginning. The grumbler must grumble then, the self-pitier must pity himself till the tears course down his cheek. Even the cheery one will look glum. I parted with all my comforts in detail—my friends, my unblistered toes and heels, my comfortable soft indoors bed, my regular meals and the plenty of them, my town-bred laziness.

Yet sad and downcast as I was, I felt there was a force outside making for happiness. Nature herself came out beguiling and smiling. She showed herself around in roads that all led Paradise-ward.

Leaving behind Novorossisk, with its cement fac-

tories and soap-works, its long esplanade, many piers, and ships of all nations, I took a road which followed the coast-line along cliffs to Kabardinka and Gelendzhik—it is called the "hunger road" owing to the fact that it was begun in a year when the crops failed. It was commenced, if not finished, by the labour of the "unemployed." It is a beautiful pathway along mountain sides, through peach orchards and vineyards, and always in sight of the far sea. It undulates and winds from country house to country house, from estate to estate, and one meets upon the road not only Caucasians and mouzhiks, but the Russian nobility *en vacance*, for the most part, well-dressed ladies strolling leisurely along the cliffs or reclining in their carriages. One is informed by notices on the gates of the houses that the owner is Prince this or Count that, as the case may be.

Here, as indeed all along the coast, it used to be fairly easy to acquire land from the Government on condition that it be cleared, cultivated, and planted in a certain number of years. Novorossisk being on the railway, most of the available land has now been taken. Not only is the country colonised successfully, but a considerable quantity of fruit is sent up each year to northern markets. Go but a little way along the coast, however, to a point where the steamboat does not call, and there is no railway, and the wildness and solitude of the country is amazing.

I arrived at Novorossisk at about two in the afternoon; the day was cloudy and the wind came dancing over the sea with rain on its shoulders. There were two sharp showers, and I sheltered myself in a prince's orchard. I did not feel very happy at the weather so inopportunely showing its hand, and I thought of the

thousand versts in front of me with some foreboding. As I said, I took to the road gingerly, as one sometimes delivers one's self into cold water. I passed by these aristocratic establishments somewhat sourly, and was ready to make some judgments very much in the vein of a grudging and envious tramp. Yet in truth I envied no one. And more easily might the luxurious envy me my happiness than I theirs.

On my first afternoon I walked just eight miles. The sky cleared at evening, and there was prospect of a calm night. The road was high up over the sea on a platform made in the side of the cliff. I clambered up the hill slope, and found an accidental level patch under the shelter of a yew tree. I removed the stones on the ground, smoothed the earth, took away the tangles of withered thorns and made a bed, arranged my pack for a pillow, spread out my blanket and lay in it.

I made the plunge: to-day I am definitely committed to the road.

III

AT THE SEASIDE IN RUSSIA

MY way lay through five well-known watering-places: Gelendzhik, Tuapse, Sotchi, Gagri, and Sukhum, and, when later I recrossed the Black Sea to Sevastopol, I tramped through Yalta also. Yalta is the most famous and fashionable resort; it is near the Tsar's Crimean estate of Livadia, and is constantly filled with courtiers. After Yalta, Sukhum is most popular, Gagri is very select and aristocratic, Tuapse is going to be a Caucasian Brighton when the railway from Maikop is finished, and Gelendzhik, being the cheapest to get to, is most popular with the lower middle class short of means. Each resort depends on its support from doctors in Russia. Every doctor in St. Petersburg or Moscow has his own particular ideas about these *Kurorts*, and advises them to his patients mainly by whim. And there is not one of these five places that has not been condemned publicly by some doctor or other as pestilential. It is even seriously stated in the towns that Sotchi bribes doctors to make denunciations of Tuapse, and *vice versa*. All I personally can say about them is that the climate is mild, and that at least, among the natives, malaria and other fevers rage all the summer through.

I arrived at Gelendzhik on my second day, in the evening. It is a pleasant place, picturesque and quiet. Hills stand around it, the sea is many-coloured

and of extraordinary variety of tone and beauty, and there is no noise but of the cattle lowing in the pastures and the children playing in the roadway. There is no railway, no electric tram, no factory, no pavement on which boots can clatter, no niggers on the beach. It is indeed quiet even to the point of boredom : at least so any English person would think, accustomed to seek diversion at the seaside.

Yet visitors seldom come for less than two months, and lodgings are let for the whole season !

What happens is something like this : a woman brings her husband and the children down—women manage everything in Russia—and they go into the miserable but many-roomed hotel for a day till they find a lodging. The woman goes out and examines every lodging in the village, spending a quarter of an hour at each, haggling over the price and demanding alterations in the furniture and conveniences, and in each case saying she will return on the morrow and "let them know." In the end of ends she chooses largely by whim, but certainly beats the landlady down to lowest terms. For ten pounds it is possible to get two or three rooms for the season, simply furnished ; for thirty to sixty pounds a fine villa, garden, and orchard, with abundance of cherries, grapes, and roses, a place with two verandahs creeper-shaded, a balcony with couches for sun-baths, and, if the villa is on the shore, a private dressing-room over the water.

You have your own servants, and they do the cooking, or you have the dinner sent in hot every day from one of the many restaurants. The latter is, of course, a very convenient and time-saving arrangement, as for two guineas a month it is possible to get a well-cooked, plentiful dinner.

Beyond grocers' and bakers' there are no shops to speak of at Gelendzhik—certainly no fancy shops with bathing costumes, spades and pails, and fishing nets as one sees in England. Only the Society of Civilisation has a kiosk where it sells picture post-cards, newspapers, novels, and polished pebbles; and one, Petrof, sells curios and mementoes, tiger shells, fossilised sword-fish, and "presents from Gelendzhik."

Along the shore there is little animation. Only a very few children are interested to make sand castles, and fewer still to fish. Bathing is the great function whereby life really has variety. Everyone goes in to bathe—when the weather has reached that point of heat when the doctors give their permission. No one remains more than ten minutes in the water. As the sea is very quiet, it is possible to go out every day. There are fixed wooden bathing houses over the water, and a penny charge is made for the use of a dressing-room. If the visitor purchases a certain number of tickets he can use the village library free. Despite this very encouraging arrangement, a goodly number of people simply strip in the open beach; it is more comfortable on the beach and no one objects to the gaze of passers-by. For the rest, the bathing costume is rather a rarity, and even women of culture and refinement feel no self-consciousness while splashing naturally in the water. Many women can swim very well, and those who cannot, wear a petticoat which they use cleverly as an air-holder to float them whilst they learn to use their legs.

Along the shore from the pier to the high rocks of Tolsty Meess, there is a promenade on sunny evenings. There, may be seen, if not fashion, at least colour and form. The young Russian lady at the

seaside wears colours that would be impossible in England—bright reds and blues and yellows, gorgeous Caucasian scarves, purple and crimson Turkish slippers, dresses with a white stripe down the middle; but she does so with grace. There are no hats to be seen—the scarf or veils take their place. The men at Gelendzhik are either in official uniforms or in gay cotton blouses fastened with sashes or cords. The linen collar is a rarity. No men are to be seen in knickers; no one manifests any athleticism, and walking is *infra dig.* The children go out with baskets picking wild berries; the young men and women walk up and down the main street and the shore and gardens on a festival evening; but to take a walk of say two miles is labour—certainly not a thing that could be done for pleasure. Those who go for picnics hire a cart; all the people are carried, and with them the provisions for a big meal, the samovar, and bag of charcoal.

Many people, who are really very well and in health, imagine themselves to be excessively ill, and an extraordinary number indulge in sun-baths, extending themselves naked in canvas chairs on their balconies in the sun; others take mud-baths, lying buried up to the neck in slime at the mud-bath establishments; others have hot sea-baths every day. Vegetarian restaurants flourish, and nearly every visitor has some particular fad of his own about his health.

It might be thought that the watering-place is under the circumstances rather tedious, and I am sure most English should find it so; but Russians live very differently from English people. It is easy, and not at all unconventional, to speak to utter strangers on

A TYPICAL DATCHA: GELENDZHIK

THE SANDS OF GELENDZHIK

the shore, and in a few days become on quite intimate terms. Russians are very interested in one another. The elders have an unending delight in discussing the prices of all things; the young ones like to flirt, play cards, and dance. Best of all, every one likes to talk endlessly, even over nothing. To the educated Russian, talking and eating seem to mean happiness.

It might be asked—"Is there no district council? is there nothing done for the people? The answer is —nothing. There is a park dedicated to the Prophet Elijah, a bit of malarial forest surrounded by barbed wire, and having a notice to this effect:

"In the Name of the Prophet Elijah,
Park.
Don't break the branches or pluck the flowers."

There is a path over sand-banks to a bandstand, called a rotunda; there is a mouldy grey-walled ruin let out to strolling players and called the Kursaal; there is a lumber-shed where one can see "la vie sur l'écran; an absolutely new programme," but this last, I suppose, is a private concern. The place is not drained, and cottages get a foot or so of water in the kitchen when there is a storm. Sewage is not conducted anywhere. At a spot on the shore, otherwise most pleasant, a public slaughter-house has been built which

"Doth the multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red."

IV

FLOWERS AND FRUIT

A WORD might well be said on the wild flowers of Gelendzhik. They do not really pertain to Gelendzhik, the seaside resort, for nobody pays any attention to them. They blossom on the hillside, along the banks of the rivulets, in the quarries and on the cliffs; but few, if any, Russians take the trouble to look for wild flowers, and not even the peasants know their names. It must be presumed that Russians do not love wild flowers. Their fondness for bouquets of hot-house flowers is no more than a bourgeois taste for something which costs money.

I have walked there in autumn and in spring, and know the wondrous things that bloom on the hills: sweet-williams, crimson and bright as jewels; large Canterbury bells, sweet-peas, rock-roses, golden rod. You turn off from the roadway and take a stony upland path through the woods, and come upon great patches of Adam's flannel, so realistically named after its appearance. The marbled white butterfly, a dainty lady of the air, settles on the candytuft; little wild tortoises, like toys, scuttle past the flax blossoms. The heavy-bodied crimson burnet moth hangs on the air like animated bunting, and one sees the yellow web that held its pupa case attached to the blade of tall

lean grasses. The blackbirds flutter and chatter in the hawthorns, and, passing round a bush to see the bird, you come on delicate fragrant Spiræa springing up in the shade. In the open, beside the rough stones, are startling red geums. The whole wood is a natural garden, growing and thriving under Nature's care. How wonderful a garden it is, and what a gift she holds in her hand the honeysuckle tells, for many bushes are laden with honeysuckle, and the air of leagues of meadow is perfumed.

As I walked along its roads in the autumn my eyes constantly rested on regiments of yellow hollyhocks and evening primroses, all wild, growing by the way, unaware of their rights to places in gardens, quite unselfconscious, like village maidens who do not know a passing townsman thinks them pretty.

And besides the flowers there was beautiful fruit; soft cloudy-crimson kizil, russet pears green speckled, rusty brown and purple grapes. Winter cherries looked out everywhere and in great profusion. I saw the little red fruit of butchers' broom, resting in the centre of green leaves like meat on a plate. The children and the peasant women gather wild strawberries, cherries, and kizil plums in sufficient abundance to sell in the market. A pleasant sight they look, coming into the *bazar* in the afternoon with baskets of fruit.

As for cultivated flowers, few people have gardens. There are wildernesses of fine roses round about neglected villas, but none of the dainty flowers that have to be carefully looked after if they are to show their faces at all. Fruit is, however, considerably cultivated by the natives, who plant their land with cuttings from the wild trees of the forest. In a

remarkably short time the grape, the pear, the apple, and the almond improve in size and taste. There are large orchards laden with fruit that sells at high prices in Central Russia, and all drawn from the lately cultured crabs and elemental pears.

V

ALONG THE TOBACCO PLANTATIONS

SOUTH and west of Gelendzhik the land grows out to a cape, and three miles away at Tolsty Meess the waves beat on high cement-coloured cliffs of cavernous aqueous rock. Here, even in the hottest summer weather, there is a freshness from over the sea, and it is possible to stretch one's self out on the dry grass and watch the waves breaking far beneath. It is pleasant here at night when the moon-beams light up the sheer sides of the cliff so that they gleam like steel, and one listens to a voice that goes on for ever and ever, the endless murmur of the waves.

I walked round the cape one day, following the coast line, and found a somewhat wild tree-covered tableland stretching, with scarcely a settlement in between, to Osipovka. Returning from my expedition, I stayed a night at Gelendzhik, and then took the alternative route, the road over the Michael Pass. Meanwhile the wind had changed to the north-east (the *bora*), and the weather seemed likely to be bad. The *bora* is the terror of the whole district, and greatly discounts whatever attractions the place has as a health resort. It comes up suddenly from the steppes, and there is no protection from it. In the height of summer it brings storms of sand and dust, with great heat. In the autumn and winter it brings rain or snow, changing the temperature from that of

London to that of Iceland. It is said that even in Archangel Government one could not easily suffer so much from cold as during a January spell of the north-east wind in the town of Novorossisk. There is no escaping from the wind. Its influence penetrates all walls, and even in a dungeon one would know when the wind had changed. When it comes hot and dry in the sultry days of July, all nature bends and withers before it. Anyone who has walked on the peaceful Russian steppes in September has seen the herbage all burnt to powder rising in puffs at each stamp of the foot, rising in great clouds before even a little breeze; these steppes are the record of the east wind's history. It is a wind of the desert.

This autumn day at Gelendzhik was cold and cheerless, and the wind in its winter mood had whipped the water of the calm bay into a tempestuous whirlpool. "The bora has come," said everyone, and shuddered. "It will perhaps last weeks." But, fortunately for them and for me, it passed away as suddenly as it had appeared. At mid-day the wind changed, the sky cleared, and the countryside healed itself in a gentle sea breeze. I set out in pleasant weather to cross the Ketsekhur hills, and if possible reach Pschadsk by nightfall. In a few days I expected to reach Tuapse, but perhaps I should take a week over it, for Tuapse is a hundred miles from Gelendzhik, and I had no intention to hurry.

Leaving the shore, the road goes swiftly upward through beautiful forested country. The landscape is diversified. There are soon vistas of tree-tops beneath one, and at the same time trees upward, in front, to the very sky. The view of the sea is screened, and instead of the sea the eye traverses

dark valleys full of trees, and far ranges tree-covered to the horizon. Scarcely the sight of one bare jagged rock in miles and miles of wooded hills tells how fertile and warm is the clime, and also that despite all appearances the mountains are not high.

I passed over the river Sometimes (Inogda), so called because it is sometimes a river, and sometimes not—on this occasion it was not. Most of the rivulets might be given this name; you search in vain for streams indicated in maps, you find only parched stony river-beds. This is a sorrow to the vagabond, for he wants water for several purposes; to make tea, to make soup, to cook fruit. In this country, moreover, I was constantly deceived by the rustle of the poplars. It is difficult indeed to distinguish between the rustling of the leaves and the sound of trickling streams. And here no streams trickled; indeed, on the third day after leaving Gelendzhik, I heard a river and thought it was the wind in the forest, so used had I become to the deception.

On St. Michael's Pass I made my dinner in a camp of woodmen, a fine band of Russians living in tents in the forest, hewing down trees and selling them to carters from Novorossisk. They sold fair-sized oak trees at half-a-crown apiece. A carter on each journey he made bought two or three trees, roped them together, fixed them on his long horse-trolley and returned to Novorossisk, there to sell retail.

The woodmen were very curious as to my doings and destination, and asked all the questions usual in Russia. I told them I was going to the monastery of New Athos to inquire about peasant pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and that I might possibly join a party of pilgrims going to Jerusalem through Asia Minor.

They understood this to mean that I was myself a pilgrim. "I warn you not to go," said a little Russian. "Pilgrimaging is all knavery now. The Greek monks exploit it. They even sell the Russian peasant girls into the Turkish households, to become Turkish wives. I have heard: I know. I'm sure it is much better to go to Russian shrines than to Jerusalem. The Greeks in Palestine do not believe in Christianity; they are more truly priests of Anti-Christ. In secret they call our simple faith superstition, and they fleece the poor peasants unmercifully."

Most of the woodsmen were "molokans," and they were all somewhat "advanced." One of them said to me, "What is going to happen in England now? You will be a republic, won't you? Nothing stands in the way of the people's will."

He referred to the Lords' abdication of their power of veto in August 1911. I was evidently not outside the range of burning questions yet.

This mouzhik turned out to be an ardent politician, and evidently somewhat of a revolutionary propagandist. There was an understanding among all these woodsmen—they had talked of life and come to some decisions together. They all felt particularly friendly towards me because I was one of a nation that had fought for its liberty and won it. This was somewhat pathetic, seeing how at that very moment British labour was up in arms against intolerable conditions, and almost every class of workmen in Great Britain was threatening to go on strike.

I clambered down on the other side of the pass to the verdant valley of the river Pschtchada, where for the first time I saw tobacco plantations. When I came to a village, I found that all the walls and roofs

of houses and barns were clothed in tobacco leaves hung up to dry. The village masqueraded in green and gold, and not a patch of wall was visible. The tobacco leaves in the field are deep, dark green; but hanging on the walls they are all shades, from a tender spring colour to rich metallic brown.

I passed through acres of sunflowers with their broad yellow faces seeming somewhat exasperated at finding themselves in such a crowd. After the sunflowers were maize fields; the maize all seven feet high, and waving plumes over one's head. Then came plots of melons, aubergines, chilies, pumpkins. The dark-striped melons, the *arbuses*, lay heavily on the earth, fat, like sleek caterpillars just about to change their skins; the yellow water-melons were gay as if some one had applied their colour from a paint-box.

Nearly all the farm labourers had provisional huts put up in the fields, and evidently lived there through the harvest season. At dusk they lighted up bonfires and the smoke and flames shone far away on the forest edge at the verge of the estates.

I did not quite reach Pschadsk that night, but slept a mile or so before the village in a conveniently shaped cradle under a tree. The full moon came up from behind a dark forest on a hill, and looked at me as I fell asleep. Next morning I wakened in the misty hour before dawn, and lit a bonfire to warm myself. The day began coldly, but with the coming of the sun, turned to heat.

In my road diary I have this record of the morning, written sitting on the village green at 10 A.M. "I am now sitting on a log in the village of Pschadsk. I have just bought a pound of bread and a cucumber

for my second meal, and inquisitive pigs are already snorting at my toes to see if I shall drop anything that they can eat. The village is a long, picturesque settlement. The houses are all hung with yellowing tobacco leaves and bright red chilies; on some roofs are sunflower tops and cored apples drying in the sun. Near me a Greek woman is making crab-apple and almond jam—paring the little apples but not splitting them, coring them, and putting almonds in the places where the cores have been; boiling the whole with strong syrup in a copper bowl over a wood and charcoal fire on the village green."

From Pschadsk the road ascended to the Shemdzhedath Pass over another range of low hills, and the scenery of the day before was repeated. There was, however, more forest and less culture. In the valleys I found it very swampy, and the people spoke much of malaria. The earth was damp, and, despite all the heat of the day, it remained sticky to the touch. I am told that the ground in these parts does not get dry even in July. To sleep on the ground with nothing much between one and the damp is accounted very dangerous. Vegetation was rank; the trees glorious; and, as if the fruitful earth wished to show how full her hands were, the trees were all festooned with wild hops and grapes.

I had a sleepless night under an old apple tree in a very damp region. Shortly after lying down I began to shiver badly, so that I superstitiously took a tablet which Olga had given me to preserve me against fever. About midnight I gathered wood and made a big bonfire, and added to it whole branches, great strips of bark and old roots, and I finally rolled two rotten tree trunks on to the scene and burned them. The

whole roared and blazed and shone out into the night so as to banish cold, damp, shivering, fever, all. It was immensely exhilarating. By the aid of the rotten wood the fire lasted till dawn, and I lay beside it comfortably ; looked at it, half dozed, poked it, raked the embers together, dozed again. About two o'clock in the morning I could hear all about me in the forest the plop of heavy drops of water falling on to the ground. It sounded like rain, but it was simply the moisture falling from the trees. Next morning I lay on a high dry bank under the sun, and slept. A strong sea breeze rushed over me. The brightness of the sun my sleeping self took to be the glare and heat of my night furnace continuing, the sound of the wind in the trees to be the roaring and crackling of the branches.

I came to Archipof-Osipovka, a remarkably pretty village on a little Black Sea bay. It spreads itself out for about two miles along the course of the Tekos rivulet. It has a hundred yards of shore cut off sharply north and south by steep rocks. There is no pier, no business, no visitors, not even a post-office. The village cattle lie on the sands. The Black Sea passenger steamboats pass it by, but everybody knows it from the sea by the lively windmill planted on the shore, and the large white cross erected high on the ruins of its ancient fortress.

The white cross is to the honour of a soldier Archipof-Osipof, after whom the place is named. In the year 1840 the hillmen won possession of the fortress, and the Russian officer directing the forces against it appealed for one man to go forward and fire the gunpowder known to be in the cellars of the castle. It was Archipof who answered, " Remember me when

you get back to Russia, comrades!" and gave his life in the firing of the powder.

I was much tempted to spend a night indoors at Osipovka, but, finding a deep dark cave on the sea-shore, I preferred that, and I slept a long night on a sand-bed. The cave was sheltered from the wind, and was quite dry.

Next day was a calm bright Sunday, and I spent the whole morning by the sea, washing linen, writing, and chasing away wasps that would settle on my pencil. The sky was cloudless, and a gentle sea breeze fanned across the water all the day. The high tide had rolled up an old tree trunk on the sand, and it was on that I sat. Whilst I was there, naked boys came down on horseback and took their horses into the waves. Then they dressed on the shore without drying, and returned to the village. It was the festival of the beheading of St. John the Baptist, and there was too much fare on the festal boards, and too many games in the streets for them to remain long at the sea.

Half the following night I slept by the roadway and half in a barn, for a great thunderstorm came up with floods of rain. I enjoyed pleasant hospitality in a colonist family, and in the morning was regaled with pumpkin pies which the lady of the house made very well.

The way lay through woods and wound over hills; there were clearings and little villages and great apple orchards. Trying to buy a pennyworth of apples at a cottage, a peasant woman pointed to a barrel and said, "Take as many as you like. We feed the pigs with them. Is it likely we should charge human beings anything?" I had a lazy day, spending a

whole afternoon in a shady spot sipping tea, munching apples, and reading.

In the evening I set out seriously for the first time during that day, and I did not stop till I came to Dzhugba, a small untidy port in a seaweedy bay. At Dzhugba, passenger steamers call occasionally; it is also a seaside resort, but is very small, has few shops, no bathing coaches, and no gardens or promenade. The inhabitants, Greeks, Russians, and Turks, make a living by the culture of tobacco, maize, and kitchen vegetables; they live mostly on fish, which are caught plentifully in the harbour even by children. In this autumn season of the year the great red mush melon coloured the countryside. Every peasant ate melon by the roadway, and chunks of green parings, or of pink centre, uneaten, littered the country lanes. Wild walnuts grew in great profusion, and they also seemed to be an important article of diet.

I had a most delightful walk over the mountains to Olginka, partly by way of the shore, and partly by a hilly and circuitous highway. The sea was as quiet as a little lake, and it bore the hot sun patiently. Over the waves at noon were faint clouds of vapour drawn by the sun. I bathed three times this day—the weather was so hot. I walked barefoot on the sands, and crammed into my knapsack every superfluous piece of clothing, even my coat—I walked in my Russian blouse. Now and then little rivulets came from the cliffs, and trickled in wee channels into the sea. There were bushes green and pleasant even on the seashore, and in coigns of the cliff ripe blackberries which I gathered in saucepanfuls—big shapely blackberries which might well have been eaten one by one and philosophised over, but which in the luxury of

Nature's table I was able to pour into my mouth in sixes and sevens. More refreshing than grapes! This day and the next I lived on wild fruit. I found a pumpkin growing by the shore, cut it up and boiled it; it lasted some days. I stewed kizil and wild pears together and found them pleasant. All day I only saw one human being—an ancient Greek peasant who saluted me with the words, "Berry hunting! You've come to a good place." I think he had felt rather afraid when he first saw me in the distance, and was glad to feel reassured that I had only come from Dzhugba to gather berries.

I slept that night on the shore and lit a bonfire to keep myself warm. Next day I sought out the high-road, and walked up hill and down dale in sun and breeze to Olginka Bay, the most beautiful and quiet little corner of the whole Black Sea shore.

VI

COLONISATION AND POLITICS

WHAT must strike the traveller along this shore is the extraordinary wildness and solitude of places the most fertile in Europe. The farther south one travels—that is, the farther from the railway—the less there is to be seen of human life and toil. The Caucasus may be the brightest gem in the crown of Empire, but I'm afraid it is held only like a gem—for barbaric splendour of possession and nothing more.

Russians themselves grumble about the wealth of gold and copper and so forth hidden in the depths of the mountains unworked. They think the Caucasus another Urals, and, though in that they are merely credulous, it is certainly true that the Caucasus abound in precious minerals. Nine out of every ten colonists whom I met enlarged on the coal, iron, gold, silver, asbestos, and what not that they knew to be within a few miles of their estates. "What a land is ours," they said, "if only it were in British or German hands!"

That is the vulgarest Russian thought, and the most widespread. Popular economics gets no further than that. No one asks whether the Urals are healthier and happier for the British and German firms exploiting the treasures of the rocks there; no one asks which it is better to produce, corn or gold?—which yields the nobler national life, which

even yields the more profit for labour? For my part, having wandered in almost every corner of Russia, I am certain that every step which Russia takes away from being a corn-producing land to being a mineral-producing one, is a step towards national perdition.

But the Caucasian shore of the Black Sea stands undeveloped either way, interiorly or exteriorly. It was more cultivated in the time when it was held by the Turks. For, following on the Russian occupation of the territory, the Mahomedan hillmen, chiefly the Cherkesses, abandoned the country. They gathered their tribes together—men, women and children—and sailed away to Asia Minor to be under the Crescent once more. They left their houses, household goods, orchards and cornfields, without question or price, to the Russians, and departed for ever. One would have thought that the peoples of the Don Province and the central provinces would have poured into the evacuated country as the English did into South Africa. Nothing of the kind. Even the old orchards were allowed to breed back to forest, and many grain fields became wildernesses. All the way from Novorossisk to Poti, if we except the town of Tuapse, one may say there is nothing doing—nothing doing of any kind. All the stream of Russian colonisation goes eastward to Siberia; it is a traditional movement, and only by an artificial governmental intervention could these parts be populated by the simple peasantry of Russia. Yet there is fruitful land, the most fruitful in Europe, acquirable on easy terms from the Government or from private owners. Considering the food necessities of the west, there is not a mile of these western slopes of these mountains that should not be in the care of man, yielding grain

and fruit, wine, tea, cocoa. There should be acres of maize and wheat climbing up from the valleys. Vineyards, cherry gardens, orangeries, lemon groves, tea plantations. Good roads and happy peasants on them, comfortable farmhouses with good walls and shady gardens, prosperous villages, churches, village life on the green and in the cottage. The thought of this ideal colonisation was inevitably with me this autumn, when some millions of peasant folk were suffering from famine in the Southern and Eastern Provinces of Russia.

In a few years, as Englishmen interested in foreign commerce know, a railway will be completed, joining Batum with Tuapse and Tuapse with Maikop Armavir and Rostof-on-the-Don. It is generally expected that the railway will mean commercial development. Probably fruit-growing will greatly increase, for it is not profitable to grow fruit unless it can be exported readily. Unfortunately on the strength of this railway there is a great amount of speculation in land, the taking up of property simply to sell it at a higher rate when its desirability has increased. The Russian middle class is incorrigible. It is always crying out for the development of Russia, but it has little national conscience. It calls out politically about the state of the peasants, but is ready to debauch them by bringing them into factory life under the worst industrial conditions and for the lowest wage; it blames the Government for using military force, yet will calmly see strikers shot down if the strikers are their own labourers; it joins in the clamour of "the land for the people," and yet speculates in land, keeping it barren in the hope of selling it selfishly when everybody wants it.

What is wanted in the Caucasus is a good sound conservative government—a rather masterful one if you like, but one that is paternal. Speculators should be headed off, the malarial marshes should be drained, peasants should be systematically installed, and they should be protected from Caucasian robbers by a trained band of mounted and armed police.

That brings me to the political situation, and the question of English sympathies and antipathies with regard to Russia. The air will be clearer for a page of definitions and statements.

Russia is as yet a Conservative country: the great majority of the people stand true to Russia as she was. The true Conservative wishes to conserve his country and nation in a well-defined state of prosperity and happiness. He believes that Russia is worth to God in terms of simple human lives, and not in terms of factory shafts and vulgar fortunes. He believes in the nation as a Church, and not in the nation as a shop, not even in the nation as a co-operative and profit-sharing shop. His ideal is "Holy Russia," the foundation of which is the peasantry, whose framework is the Church, whose head the Tsar.

The true opposition to Conservatism is Anarchism and not Liberalism. Conservatives *versus* Anarchists or Revolutionaries is a simple statement of opposing forces. But, unfortunately, there is a depraved Conservatism which takes expression in Imperialism or Capitalism, and these developments have evoked in opposition Liberalism and Social Democracy. Of the opposition forces, the one which is most interesting is Liberalism, broadly understood throughout Europe as Nationalism as opposed to Imperialism, and as respect for the rights of individuals as opposed to Collectivism.

Liberalism, as we all know, believes in little nations rather than in large empires. It believes in autonomy for colonies, and strong local government for provinces. It encourages national characteristics, distinctive language, dress and custom, the barriers which keep people apart. It lends its sympathies to nations struggling to save and keep their nationality, such as Finland, Poland, Persia, Turkey. It is not Liberalism to oppose the annexation of such a country as Mongolia, for the people of Mongolia invited Russia to govern them; the acceptance of Mongolia by Russia would be Conservatism and not Imperialism. English Liberalism is true to itself when it extends its sympathies to Persia and Finland; it would be truer still if it extended a helping arm, but in these days its arms are tied by commercial obligation, for Liberalism has also developed away from itself to Capitalism and Imperialism. Liberalism in its logical conclusion is a belief in the life and happiness of the individual, a belief in the peasant in his village, in the self-government of towns and states, and in that it seems to be like Conservatism. But the great difference lies in the fact that the Liberal wishes the people themselves to rule the land, the Third Estate initiating all legislature and imposing it upon the other two Estates of the realm. In the breakdown of feudal Conservatism now taking place all over the world, he calls upon the popular imagination to design and build a new and happier state.

Liberal Imperialism is a contradiction in terms, as, of course, was Liberal Unionism. But nowadays opportunism has gone so far that fundamental principles are lost sight of even by the most honest of

politicians. To take a familiar example from English life, the *Daily News*, which consistently and clearly opposes Russia's absorption of Persia, has itself lately absorbed the *Morning Leader*, an act of journalistic Imperialism; and, whilst it talks honourably of the rights of Finland, forgets all about the rights of Ulster. The *Mail*, on the other hand, though ostensibly Conservative, puts trade before the Church, as do many who call themselves Conservative nowadays. New parties have arisen within the domain of the old, and it is a question whether politics will not degenerate into a war of Capital against Labour, of commercial masters against commercial slaves.

In Russia, as yet, Conservatism holds sway and is successful, though there, as in England, Imperialism causes the birth of a strong Liberalism; and Capitalism necessitates Social Democracy and the organisation of labour.

VII

A COLONIST FAMILY

AT Olginka I met a family of Russian colonists, the Bielokrilofs, a new type of peasants, literate, inclined to think on public matters, and Liberals—self-styled Liberals.

I called on the family about eight o'clock in the morning; the father and mother had been up some hours, and the sons were just stretching themselves on the hay preliminary to rising. I hailed the mother as she was returning from driving the cows to pasture. "Can I have a basin of milk?" I said. She intimated that I might have as much as I liked, and welcome. So I stepped up the yard and in at the door to the parlour kitchen, and awaited the good lady's pleasure.

Old Bielokrilof came in, a hearty fellow of forty-five, asked my province and the direction of my steps, and received the usual answers. When he heard I was English he was immensely pleased.

"We also are in the modern movement," said he.

"What movement?" I asked.

"The Liberal movement. I know what is going on in your country; the sharing out of the land. No doubt you think it a little strange in this God-forsaken bear-corner of Russia that anyone should know, but I keep in touch with the world's happenings. I subscribe to the *Universal Panorama;* I've no doubt you've seen it. It only costs three copecks a copy

post free, not much of a paper, but it has plenty of pictures, and it tells one all the news of the world. Ai, ai, what have your lords been doing? Just as in Russia it seems, holding the land. We used to live in Smolensk Province, and were much ground down. It was intolerable. I heard of the chance of getting land down by the Black Sea, saved some money, and came down and took a few dessiatinas of the uncleared shoreland here at Olginka. You know the colonisation system: the purchase money is spread over ten years; it is necessary to cultivate the whole of the soil and build a house, then by Government signature the land becomes yours for ever."

"And how?" asked I. "Is it hard to pay?"

The hostess brought in a pot of milk and some cakes, saying "Eat, eat!"

"*You'll* have some," said I to the host. The colonist agreed, took one or two of the cakes and called for the samovar that he might have tea; raw milk he would have none of.

"What were you saying?" he resumed. "Hard to pay?—No; soon it will be paid off, and I shall leave to my family and the name of Bielokrilof this plot of land for ever."

He smacked his lips, and I could see he felt very happy. It is astonishing what happiness there is in the possession of a little property which a man feels is going to his son and his son's son.

"So you feel there is less oppression now?" I asked.

"Oh, I can't say that," he replied. "The weather is bad; one gets old more quickly than up in Smolensk Government. You get more handsome, but the bones go all soft. We, none of us, are as strong. There

isn't frost enough. Frost gives the peasant a strong hard bark, and that saves his bones and heart. But here you never know when you are going to drop down dead."

"Still that is more the hand of God," said I. "You can scarcely complain. I meant, aren't you freer? Don't you feel less tyrannised over?"

The old man rolled his eyes.

"If I go to the court to settle a matter," said he, "does not the *barin* sit whilst I stand? And if I pray to God and the *barin* prays, is it counted equal? Oh, no, not a bit. Of course God hears us both, but it is to the *barin* that He pays attention."

One of the sons came in, and without any "by your leave" broke into our conversation.

"I, you know, am a Socialist. I am going into the army next year; the lot has fallen to me, but I shan't forget to work for the party. All we here are *melky intelligentia*."

"Melky" means shallow. I thought it rather amusing to hear the boy call himself "shallow" with pride. In the new Russia it is better to be shallowly educated than not educated at all, and the shallow have room to be proud, seeing all the millions who are without letters at all.

"Ai, ai," said the young man, pouring himself out tea. "September has come; it means autumn is here, and my beloved summer is gone. No more bathing parties, no more glees in the evening. You know, just now we have parades with the village girls and sing songs together, sometimes such songs as:

'The Tsar gave freedom to all,
Freedom to sheep and goats.'"

He lowered his voice. "They put people in prison for singing that song now," he said. "Yes; we have fine glees as we walk along. Do your people in England sing so?"

"The English people are not so fond of singing as of listening to singing," I replied. "But the working people sing on festival days (Bank Holidays). They sing because they are so happy to be free from work."

"But don't they sing as they pick the tobacco in the field, and as they cut the corn?"

"We don't grow tobacco in England," said I, "but I don't suppose we'd sing over the picking of it anyway."

"Money," said the young man with a knowing grin; "money, eh; money in the pocket, that's better than songs. With us, songs and no money; with you, money and no songs."

"That's about it."

"Do you count it improper to speak to a girl you don't know? We used to think it so in the north where we come from; and if a girl allowed you to speak to her and talk to her it meant that she was bad; but here no one sees any harm in it. Here all is free. What dances we have! Sometimes we have a public-house ball . . . my! What a time we have! Here the girls let you kiss them; they are much more easily kissed than in the north. There's a girl I know, Tania; ah, if you could only see her—a fine young lady I can tell you! Akh!"

He smacked his lips.

I gathered that when he went to be a soldier he would, like the "absent-minded beggar," leave a lot of little things behind him.

The old man had been effaced by his talkative son, and he contented himself with advising us to help ourselves to the fare. A younger one came in with a gun which he stood in a corner. He had shot a wood-pigeon.

"A dove," said the old man; "oh dear!" He crossed himself, but the brothers laughed.

A third brother brought us a basket of walnuts and apples, and we played with the meal a good hour by the clock. The day was dedicated to the relics of Alexander Nevsky, and it was thought it might be regarded as a half-festival. Time was certainly not precious, and no chance of making a great fortune called to them to forget the traditions of the Church. All the morning they entertained me; they were delightfully hospitable people in their way.

I satisfied myself as to the source of their knowledge of England. The *Universal Panorama* was a penny sheet, a sort of anthology of pictures from English and foreign illustrated newspapers, but chiefly from English, and pirated of course, the reproductions being made by photographing the pictures from the original newspaper. The father also showed me a book of universal knowledge which he said he read regularly, for he recognised the value of culture.

VIII

TUAPSE

I CONTINUED my tramp onward toward Tuapse. The seashore from Olginka is very beautiful, and the sea is as clear as crystal. The whole aspect of the coast is refreshing; the air is calm; the shore is steep and delicately neat; the little waves sparkle, and are so fresh and clear that one dreams of the water of life. It is a perfect district for bathing. Swimming here, to those used to the turbid water of northern seas, is something new, something extra. Here in ledges of ledges of the rock, little children catch the *stavritsa*, a little fish like a miller's-thumb. The fish swim in natural traps—long, narrow rock-channels up which it is possible to drive them into shallows and cul-de-sacs. Net and rod can be dispensed with. I myself found it an agreeable pastime to wade in the channels and catch the fish with my hands.

At Nedugskuya, half-way to Tuapse, I slept in a hollow under a crumbling cliff. All night, stones and powder kept creaking and scratching down the cliff-side and jumping over me. Next day was one of visions of the sea, breezy mountain heights, dark and shady valleys and Greek villages. In the evening I arrived at Tuapse.

Tuapse is beautiful from a distance, but when you get into it, 'tis the most untidy place was ever called a

health resort; a confusion of little streets and bad shops, dirty coffee-houses, fruit-barrows, and dust. Russian peasants, Greeks, and Turks jostle one another in the street in the laziness which is called work. Elegantly dressed visitors step along on the unpavemented side-walks; and in the air, danced by the wind, are all imaginable dust, foulness, and litter. There are expensive hotels, restaurants in gardens, and places of amusement, but, as at Gelendzhik, the Council of the town exists only to forbid, impose fines, and collect taxes. Even the sea, which a mile away is jewel-like and gleaming, is stirred up and refuse-strewn. Russians truly have little idea of what a watering place should be.

For the rest, Tuapse is all agog with the rumours of prosperity. The railway is coming from Maikop. Tuapse is going to be joined up to Russia. It is to become the export harbour for Maikop oil, the Baku of the West. It is building itself afresh; speculators have been busy for some months past buying and selling the land which they will not till, but with which they can gamble. All property has increased fifty per cent. in value; for it is thought that the railway, besides developing trade, will necessarily treble the number of summer visitors. Everyone who can borrow money is rushing up jerry-built country houses to receive the extra visitors.

In every little shop there is feverish talk of coming profits. Such faith is there in a railway! It was pathetic to hear the credulous, lisping shopmen, hitherto so poor, doing business at the rate of no more than a shilling a day, now dreaming of becoming owners of great stores and Broadway establishments, drawing up schemes and plans all day, describing the coming main

street as they imagine it. Alas for them! Russian business does not accomplish itself in a day; there never was such a country for shattered hopes, especially in connection with trade. An old man said to me ecstatically at the cottage where I had tea, "We are even having the cemetery land increased." "Whatever for?" I inquired. "Why," said he, "there will be so many more visitors. Many will be able to come when they are at death's door, seeing we've got a railway to bring them."

Prosperity to the town and death to the visitors! Perhaps, however, some of the burghers will occupy the extra space in the cemetery before the grand high street, with its electric trams and its palatial shops and banks, comes into existence. They think of houses fifty feet by twenty, and forget the humbler sort of seven feet by three, as Fielding says of one of his characters.

Still, whatever be the destiny of the inhabitants, Tuapse is in any case a fine place for the man in search of work, the tramp-labourer and the like. Few are ever turned away. As I entered the town, work-contractors looked at me with covetous eyes, and when I left I had even some trouble in getting rid of an emissary who besought me to stay — an affable young man who ran after me and asked, "Whence goest thou?"

I answered him, "To Sotchi."

"Why to Sotchi?" he asked. "It is not nearly so good there as here. Here is much work, to last all the winter, and you may earn good wages—two pounds, three pounds, perhaps four pounds a month. Stay with us."

"I don't like your Tuapse very much," I replied.

"Oh, why? It's a fine place. I can get you a job right away. What are you—a *technik?* No matter what you are, here all are wanted."

"I am a *brodyaga*—a vagabond. I have a great enmity against business, and when I see a place like Tuapse I hurry to get away from it. . . ."

And the man stood staring after me.

IX

THE OLD CRONE AND THE MOUNTAINS

THE night after leaving Tuapse was rainy, and the day following damp and cloudy. I had to make a hurried shift in the night from a grass couch to the shelter of a cave; in the morning, sticks were wet and a fire was difficult to light—I waited for my tea.

Twelve miles along a hilly verdant road and twelve along a desert sandy shore brought me to the farm-house of some poor colonists, and there I found an old dame sympathetic to strangers, cooking a meal over a charcoal fire in the yard. We had a meal together; a basin of soup, then tea. The old woman had a plate of ripe blackberries which she crushed in her tea, colouring it crimson, and she liked to prolong her tea-drinking for hours. I provided tea for us both and sugar for myself. We entered into a long conversation.

"Perhaps you think I belong to these parts?" she asked. "No, I am Rostofskaya—a Rostof woman. I prefer the town. The mountains bore me to death. To-day is a festival; but how's one to know it's a festival here—there are no people. I ought to be dressed in my best, but what's the use? Once I was a pretty woman. Though I was not young when I came here, I was still fresh and plump; but two days

after my arrival I caught two fevers at once, and I wasted away to a skeleton. My face became white, and lined like the face of a great-grandmother. The doctor, he came and said, I had two fevers—the nettle fever, and the tooth fever, and he gave me a cold compress. Thank God, I recovered, and I grew fat once more."

"You felt just as before, did you?"

"Yes, but I caught the fever a second time. This time it was malaria; once more I wasted away, and I never got my flesh back again."

She showed me her little bony arms. They were indeed wasted away. But her face had been sufficient evidence; it was no more than skin stretched over bone, and, but for the human gossipy expression of her eyes, she was a regular old witch.

We were having tea on the verandah. Round about us were the green, shrub-covered mountains, growing more cold and silent as the evening breathed over them. There was not a sound but of the sea. The one farm-hand was gone to bring the cows home.

"Do you live all by yourself?" I asked.

"All but a little thing of a girl who has gone to Tuapse for provisions. I never see a soul beyond her and Adam the whole year round. No one looks in here . . . Ugh . . . these mountains!"

She looked out at the mountains over which the dusk was settling, and shook her fist at them. They did indeed look straight down at us.

"Ai, ai, what a life! Whenever I look up there's one of these cursed mountains looking at me. What's his business with me? Nothing but mountains all day from morning to evening—the devil's own bore-

dom truly. To-day is Sunday, but why should I take the trouble to dress myself and wear a bright shawl when there's no one to see—only these impertinent mountains—akh!"

She spat on the ground, and shook her fist once more—

"*Ya tebya*—I'll give it you," she said. If the mountains understood, how they must have chuckled at the malice of the old dame.

When we had finished our meal, I paid my hostess for the bread and soup that I had consumed. The money made her very happy—I suspect she was rather a miser. She said she found me very *sympateechny*, a pleasant fellow with no "side," who addressed her in the second person plural. Asked what country I came from, I told her "Great Britain," which, of course, she had never heard of—only the educated people know that designation of our land. She had heard of Norway, she said, and no doubt it was somewhere thereabout. If I came that way again, I was to be sure and visit her. Perhaps she would have something better to offer me. She bustled around agreeably, like an old unhappy cat that has been unexpectedly caressed.

X

MANY MEETINGS

THIS was a district of vast uncultivated estates. There were many country seats lying unoccupied. It was very rarely that I met anyone on the road or on the shore, and I traversed many orchards and vineyards without being disturbed even by a dog. It was a pleasant and a very wild country. The sun beat down with July might though the time was October, and all the shore was bleached white by his rays, stones and sand and litter of jetsam all gleaming. How easy it was to make a fire on the shore here; one little flame applied to a chunk of wood set it definitely alight, and there was no need to strike a second match, or use any paper. Each morning before breakfast I bathed in the sea, and then stretched myself in the sun or in the shade on the sand, or at the base of a cliff.

One day to my astonishment, about eleven o'clock, as I was sitting, there came a party down the cliff some fifty yards from me—a gentleman, two ladies, and some children, and they separated to bathe: when the man had bathed and dressed again he came along to the log where I was sitting and inquired what I was doing. He thought I might be an artist. I told him I was tramping the Black Sea shore, and he invited me to come up to dinner an hour later.

"Come to time," said he, "and I promise you a good meal. I know you don't often get a dinner in these parts; there are too few people."

I was very ready to obey, and so in an hour climbed up the serpentine path by which they had come down. At a distance of about a mile and a half I found a pleasant white stone *datcha* standing above a fruit orchard, and my host stood at the door with a welcoming smile on his lips.

My new acquaintance was a civil servant from Petersburg, about the rank of English first division—Richard Broschiovsky, of the Agricultural department. He had taken advantage of the good terms given to colonists, and had acquired a small holding for himself on the same terms as the peasant Bielokrilof at Olginka. We sat down to a good round dinner, an abundance of Russian soup, roast duck and sauce, a milk pudding—he had excellent white wine, and from his own orchard delicious pears and peaches. He told me how he had taken the land, and the terms whereby he hoped to hold it. He was bound to clear it, plant it with fruit or corn, and build a good four-square house upon it, all within a certain number of years. The fee he paid was nominal, but after some time an inspector would come to report on the property. If the conditions were found to have been observed, the estate would be approved, and the tenant would be at liberty to buy the freehold at the rate of a hundred roubles the dessiatina.

"The estate will be mine next year," said M. Broschiovsky; "it has already been approved."

"Do you value it much?" I asked.

"It is a pleasant place to retire to in a holiday, far from the capital, high up over the sea, and in a

fruitful land. As yet it has little commercial value, for it is impossible to export fruit, but when the railway comes, as come it will for certain very soon, we shall be able to send perishable fruits safely to St. Petersburg. When the railway comes we shall grow more grapes and peaches. Now it is only convenient to grow apples, filberts, and pears; of these we always take several cases back with us home."

My host knew a man I had met at Archangel, and we talked very happily for an hour or so of my own travels and impressions. The Civil Servant thought the wandering life might be better than his at Petersburg. Here down on the Black Sea coast he went about barefoot and in a peasant shirt, and he appreciated the freedom after the immaculate uniform and irrefragable convention of the capital. What some of his friends would say if they could see him free, working in the orchard, he could not imagine. Personally, he loved the land and would gladly live on it always. There was much in what he said with which I could readily sympathise. Life on the land gives a very real happiness if the soul has not been spoiled for simple things.

It seemed a pity to part, and, indeed, I might have stayed the night with my hospitable host; but the weather was delightful, and I felt disinclined for even the gentle restraint of living under a kind man's roof. Since I could not be prevailed on to stay, I was at least loaded with fruit to eat on my way and given many a good wish. Needless to say I felt very happy and grateful for the occasion of such open-handed friendship and hospitality extended to me by an utter stranger without

my appeal. I walked away over the hills in a very pleasant frame of mind. The night was calm, and I slept under the stars.

Next day I reached the Lazarevsky settlement, a great widespread village at which steamers call occasionally, and where, beyond the ordinary inhabitants, there are a certain number of visitors. The chief business carried on is fruit-farming; peaches and grapes were in great abundance. I obtained many peaches for the asking, and I found them delicious, white, soft, and cold under the swarthy skin, like sweet ices; rich blood-crimson round about their hard wizened-looking stones.

Outside Lazarevsky, in the dead of the night, I met a pilgrim boy. I had made my bed on a high bank of grass beside the road, and had dozed off once to sleep, and wakened again. I was disturbed by heavy steps coming in my direction. I looked about me, but could not see anyone, so, to settle uneasiness there and then, I called out and hailed the someone in the darkness.

"Hail! Where are you going so late?"

The steps stopped, and a hesitating voice replied, "Hail!"

A form came into view—a boy in a peak hat, jack-boots, and rags.

"How far is it to Sotchi?" he asked.

"About sixty versts. Are you going there also? That is my way to-morrow," I replied.

The young man came over, sat down in the grass, and stared at me in surprise.

"Going to find work?" he asked; but he did not wait for a reply, stood up, and continued hurriedly—

"But I cannot wait. Do you not think I could

get to Sotchi to-morrow night if I went straight on. I think so."

"Oh no," I replied, "certainly not. You'd much better lie down and sleep. This is a very comfortable place, lie down and wait till the morning. You'll be fitter then. You can bathe also, and refresh your feet."

The boy confessed to having bad blisters, and being very tired and hungry. Fain would he lie down, and he did not need much persuasion to stop his weary tramp for the night. I lit a fire; we had tea, and we ate all the provisions in my sack—little enough, alack! Poor boy, he was simply ravenous, and had lived a whole day on one pound of bread, so little money had he in his pocket. He had worn through his boots, and his feet were blistered and cut; we doctored them as best we could with hazeline cream, a tin of which I usually keep in my wallet, and the wanderer was content to lie down to sleep.

"You come from far?" I asked.

"From Saratof."

I whistled. Saratof is at least a thousand miles north-east of Lazarevsky, away on the Volga, above Tsaritsin.

"And you go to Sotchi?"

"No, farther, to New Athos. Is it far?"

I calculated for him. Sixty versts to Sotchi, thirty to Adler, ninety to Gagri, sixty to Gudaöut, twenty more to New Athos—a hundred and seventy in all, at least.

The youngster looked dumbfounded.

"I wanted to be there next Sunday," said he. "It cannot be done perhaps. But perhaps it can be done. Wake me to-morrow early if I am sleeping; I must be away before dawn."

"How far have you come to-day?"

He mentioned a place near Tuapse, sixty versts north—forty miles.

"It's too much," I said. "You can't go on at sixty versts a day without food or proper boots."

He didn't seem to pay any attention to what I said, but he thanked me again for the bread and tea. "Oh," said he, "how hungry I have been! A workman on the road gave me a present of some nuts, and I rejoiced ever so much—*ya tak obradovalsa.*"

"But you can find any quantity of wild nuts in the forest, and grapes and berries. If you are very hungry, remember them."

The boy could not believe there were wild grapes in the forest; so, as I saw a great shadowy cluster silhouetted against the sky even from where I lay, I climbed up a tree near by and fetched them for him. He was astonished,

"Put them away for to-morrow," I urged; "they are sharp to the tongue; if you eat many they will take the tip off, but in the hot mid-day, with a glass of water from the running stream, they are delicious. Then, if you get hungry, eat blackberries; they are almost as good as bread. When you come to a farmhouse, try for some milk."

I told him further of how I managed. When I mentioned the colonist who had but lately asked me up from the shore and given me a dinner, he said, "He was a good man."

I assumed that he was going to New Athos simply to pray, and I wondered how he would get back again to Saratof. The boy answered me—

"I am not coming back—never."

"How then?"

"I am entering the monastery. I promised to be

there on Sunday. I had a little money to take me by boat from Novorossisk, but it was not enough, and, besides, I had spent nearly all of it when I got there. Never mind; God helping me, I'll get there Sunday all the same, and I must start before dawn."

"You won't come along quietly with me?"

He shook his head.

Then he went to sleep. Three hours later I wakened up and looked around me; my companion had slipped off quietly in the dark, and was gone. I never saw him again.

. . . . . .

The road to Sotchi was very beautiful, but very desolate. From sunrise to sunset I met no one but an occasional band of Greek or Turkish navvies mending the road, or a smoky-faced Persian breaking stones. Places where food could be obtained were few and far between, and although at Lazarevsky it was possible to buy dry smoked sausage at one shop and dry cheese at another, yet the settlement had no brother or sister villages along the way. There is no country more desolate than that which some tribe has abandoned, and here the trek of the Cherkesses is felt most keenly—it is a sad land of wild orchard and homestead, of empty huts and broken bridges. Everywhere are the footsteps and traces of men who have gone away never to return.

I was glad to find large sweet wild grapes, abundant walnuts, hazels, and blackberries, kisil plums, and pears; and I spent a very wild time in the woods, taking a week to get to Sotchi, for I even slept two nights in the same spot. I thought with some melancholy of my poor boy pilgrim, who wished to cover the distance in a day.

At last, running short of sugar, I sought out the haunts of men, and when I found the first shop in thirty miles its shutters were still barred, though the day stood at ten. After making much commotion, I learned that the master had gone to market early, and, as he had quarrelled the night before with his wife, the latter refused to open the shop, or have any dealings with customers. I didn't relish this visiting of the sins of the husband upon the customers. However, a somewhat gloomy watchman came out as I was going away, and made me a present of eight lumps of sugar, so I was enabled to make tea.

Next morning early I reached Dagomise, and so entered the region of Sotchi, a place of many villas and shops. Here at a general store I bought a quart of new milk, a pound of ripe garden grapes, and a pound of fresh white bread; and, sitting in the bright sunshine of the early day on a bank behind the shop, I made a fragrant meal. In Sotchi, when I arrived, I found a restaurant.

But that is anticipating matters. I slept the night at Dagomise, and weathered a thunderstorm under a bridge. I had an idle day in the forest, and only came to within ten versts of Sotchi by nightfall; and, as towns are generally inhospitable and dirty, I chose to sleep on the bracken and come in in the morning. As I was sitting on a bank making my evening tea, two Russians came along the road on bicycles. They hailed me, and asked had I seen two cyclists on the road the day before. It turned out that I had, and as a cyclist is a rare sight on these roads, I could describe them.

"Thieves!" said they. "Where were they going?"

"North," I replied. "There is no other way; the road has no turning, as you know."

The two Russians went on fast, and I continued to boil my kettle, and thought: "Seek the wind in the field, chase the devil by the heels." The thieves had at least a hundred miles start. Late that night, at about midnight I suppose, the pursuing cyclists came back, pushing their bicycles, and ringing their bells all the way to keep up their courage. I was pleasantly ensconced high up over the road in a deep bed made of a roomy hollow, filled with brown bracken that I had cut for myself before lying down, and I gave them a terrible start when I called suddenly out of the darkness of the forest all about, "Hail!"

The cyclists stopped dead, and looked about them. My voice was probably difficult to locate.

"Done anything?" I added. "Found the thieves?"

"Devil take me!" said one man to the other. "Where does the voice come from?"

Then the other cried out—

"Who are you? Where are you?"

"I'm the man you met on the road earlier in the day. I inquire after your luck. Did you come upon any trace of the thieves?"

There was a sigh of relief. Even if for a moment they had thought my voice was that of the cycle-thieves, they must have felt glad to find it was not—and to find it was not that of the devil. They told me cheerfully that they had found nothing, and had given up the quest.

"But where are you?" asked one of them. "I altogether fail to localise you."

"I'm under the old oak tree on the cliff that is

opposite. Don't be alarmed. I'm sleeping here for the night. Why haven't you lit your lamps?"

"We came without our lamps."

"Foolish bachelors! And now you must wheel your bicycles home, for the road twists and turns like a corkscrew."

"Exactly. Come with us. It will be pleasanter, and you won't catch cold if you walk. At Sotchi we can find a place for you."

I resisted the temptation, but the conversation was prolonged. I learned that one of them owned a cycle shop in Sotchi, and let out bicycles by the hour for hire. The two miscreants had taken out cycles, and gone off on them.

"Have you applied to the police?" I asked.

"We let them know—but what we want is the recovery of the bicycles, not the punishment of the thieves. The police might find the thieves and bring them to trial, but the whole business would cost us more than the cycles are worth. Then, into the bargain, we might fail to receive the lost cycles, or receive them damaged beyond repair."

I understood this perfectly well, and felt sorry. Still, nothing was to be done. I think probably the owner of the cycle worked off a good deal of his vexation in this little pursuit, and now felt quite resigned to his lot.

When they had rested some time and chatted, they resumed their way, still tinkling on their bells. I heard them for a few minutes, and then, as they turned round one of the rock-walls of the road, all was silence again. I turned on to my other side in my fern bed, pulled up my blanket, and slept till the dusk of the dawn.

XI

SOTCHI

EVEN before dawn next morning I was on the road again, for the early hours were chilly with mist. Outside the town were scores of carts laden with produce; many men, women, and children were sleeping in the carts, but some kept bonfires going and boiled water for tea; the horses, released from their shafts, were lazily grazing by the roadside. They were all going into Sotchi, but it is only rich visitors to that town who can pay for a room for themselves and stabling for horses.

As I approached the town I saw many of its night-lamps still alight, and their beams cast strange rays upon the incoming morning waves. The sky was grey as yet; the sun was rising, but in banks of clouds, and there was little promise of the hot day that was at hand. Light slowly increased in the sky; one by one the lamps of the town were put out, and little wisps of smoke began to appear at many chimneys where fires were being lit. I went down to the deserted seashore, and bathed.

Sotchi possesses three thousand inhabitants, fifty per cent. of which are Russians, the rest being Turks, Greeks, and Armenians. It has little significance except as a seaside resort. High hills cut it off from northern airs. It faces south-west, and is an admirable place for aged invalids. For the rest, it is a little

stony bay laid out for vulgar pleasure. Rich Russians bored with their town acquaintances come down and flirt with beauteous inconnues, and dine expensively at the Hôtel de la Riviera, gamble at the roulette tables, visit neighbouring estates that are for sale, and then return home.

If every day in the season is like the hot Sunday I spent there, it is an enervating, breathless town with many ugly sights upon the roads and foulnesses in the air. On the whole, the only thing that can be said for these Caucasian seaside resorts is that they have shops and lodgings, whereas the healthy country that lies between them is desolate beyond words. The health stations should be on hills and not in valleys—at least here, in the land of never-ending malaria.

I had my breakfast at a café, read the paper, sought out my letters at the post-office, answered some, had dinner at a restaurant, listened to a band playing selections from comic operas, and wandered about the little place without much personal satisfaction. There seemed to be no air in the streets. The air is of the sort that one breathes and breathes and yet does not seem to catch: the lungs can't fill themselves. And as one sits on the beach in this deficient atmosphere, one detects a subtle odour of drains.

Sotchi is undrained. It has no canalisation. But then out of the seven hundred and fifty-two towns of European Russia, over seven hundred are without drains. Even those which may be said to be drained are without the familiar earthenware pipes; scooped-out logs are employed, fixed in an inclined plane! There is not one sanitary town in the whole empire. If the business of draining any town in Russia were given to a capable English company and carried out

by them, that town would be entitled to be reckoned a first-class health resort for Russia. In Moscow and Petersburg the rich indeed have spotless English lavatories and white tiles and the rest; but not even the rich care very much about what is under the white tiles. Underground all is rotten and defiled. Whoever has walked through the streets of Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Moscow, or Rostof-on-the-Don, in the height of summer knows the appalling odours that proceed from underground. What wonder that there is cholera and plague. Disease in Russia is going to increase fearfully if Russia is going to be commercialised, and the size of towns increased. There is no such thing as a municipal conscience in Russia. The average life to which a man attains in Moscow is thirty-seven only. Where is the four-score of the Psalmist? Is it not futile that Professor Metchnikof in Paris spends his energies trying to discover a diet that will prolong old age, whilst Moscow students are gasping for a decent sewer that would add a dozen years to their youth?

With a large and very real knowledge of Russian life and character, I can say without hesitation that the most terrible peril of disease is going to be a commonplace in the history of its towns during the next two decades. Russians are only thorough in theoretical matters; in practical matters they are a long way the most careless nation in Europe. The seen matters—the unseen is of no importance. I am speaking of town life, where there is so much behind the fair exterior; in the village everything is seen.

Several Russian cities have been borrowing money lately in the European market; I have seen the prospectuses of loans to Moscow and Nikolaef at least, and I think these cities raised the money they asked

for. I am afraid not much of that money will be spent on the drains. The money, alas, will go chiefly to enrich an army of adipose bribe-taking officials and engineers, the myriads of the upper middle class who batten on the public funds.

But back to famous and miserable Sotchi! It has less public works than Dovercourt. I know it does not need electric light, pavements, level roads, post boxes, promenade, pier, park seats, fine shops—these are the impedimenta of a seaside resort. But it needs the canalisation of its sewers, the draining of the malarial rot on which it is founded, water-carts. What is the use of a famous health resort that is liable to be swept by pestilence that may give the invalid some disease worse than that with which he came to the town? The question must seem foolish to Englishmen. Yet in July Sotchi is crowded. Truly it is better in December, when the roses are just coming out; the aristocratic visitors come then. For Sotchi is indeed famous in Russia; its climate is said to be an exact replica of that of Japan. No district in Europe is like it. All Japanese plants can be grown there easily, and it abounds in bamboos, lacquer trees, wax trees, papyrus, and all manner of Eastern shrubs.

Sotchi left natural with a few cottages and fruit farms, by its peaceful river, with a pure beach, and with clear vision of its glorious hills through the dustless air, would be very beautiful, and even Sotchi artificialised, with gardens of rare shrubs and strange blossoms, with well-made streets and air kept pure, might be beautiful also. Neither of these states has been accomplished, and Sotchi is ugly.

THE ROAD ABOVE SOTCHI

XII

THE RUNAWAY SAILOR

I FLED from Sotchi up into the highlands, and in the evening found more bracing air high up on the road to Adler. There once more I slept in the bracken, and the night was sweet. Next morning when, at daybreak, I was making tea on a wood fire by the side of the road, a young man with a great and clumsy bundle on his back came tearing up to me, asked in which direction I was going, and begged to be allowed to accompany me. He also had fled from Sotchi.

"Sotchi is accursed, and its inhabitants are all ill-begotten," he swore in language not easily printed. "The dog of a captain and his relative the first mate have made me taste of the fire before my sins have made me worthy."

I must transliterate his language. I gave him a mug of hot tea which he drank at a gulp, and, still standing up whilst I sat at my ease on the turf, he continued—

"And this morning, by Heaven, I have run away! All slept. It was still dark; I flung away my official uniform. Let the dog's litter of a crew think what they like. I have stolen nothing. They owe me money, but what do I care. My wife wants me at home, and I go to her. Curse them all! If an officer comes along, the soldier salutes him, and if a soldier

passes me he makes me salute him. The officer curses the soldier, and the soldier must not reply ; but the soldier curses me, and if I curse him back, he makes a complaint against me. If I strike him and there's a fight, there's the devil to pay. What is a sailor's life? Yes, I ask God that question. Last night I was at the dim pictures (the cinematograph), and I saw how all the generals, and officers, and soldiers stood with their hats off and their heads bowed, saluting the Tsar, and the Tsar alone had his hat on, and looked around like a cock on a perch. Good to be the Tsar! Not good to be a sailor!"

This and much more the young man communicated to me, not caring whether I listened or answered, anxious only to get it out. I packed up my tea utensils, and, as he seemed in haste, we took the road together. I warned him I was a slow goer, but evidently he could not bear to be alone upon the road. He told me all his sorrows. He was a Moldavian and a common sailor, and had run away from his ship at Sotchi. His wife lived somewhere beyond Adler, up country. He had evidently taken offence at the continuous and blighting swearing of some soldier who happened to have a post on deck. His own language was bad enough, and I did not much relish his company, but he was interesting as a novelty on the road.

I was, however, meditating on deserting him, and was on the look-out for a convenient spot whereat to bathe, when a striking event in the history of the unfortunate runaway deprived me of his company in a pictorial and amusing manner. We had but walked three miles when a soldier came galloping up behind us on horseback, and began to address my sailor

friend in the most unparliamentary language. I could do the Moldavian's language into polite English, but the soldier's was that of a blackness that never comes out, and I leave it.

The sailor boy, for he was no man, lost all his words, and became very meek and mild. He wavered before the soldier's abuse like the troops before the blasting command of the sergeant in the cartoon of the celebrated Caran d'Ache, and, without even a farewell to me, he started to go back to Sotchi and resume his work on his ship. He walked demurely in front, and the evil-visaged soldier rode severely on horseback behind, covering him with his gun.

An irrelevant adventure! I sat down on a bank, and chuckled.

. . . . . .

My next village was Khost, a little settlement on a brawling mountain river. I passed to a broad and level beach. The hills of Sotchi, and indeed all the characteristic scenery of the Black Sea shore seemed to have disappeared. The fact is the sea is retreating, and the strand is here many miles broad. Khost is a dirty but ambitious village spread out on the sand. A stage-coach visits it from Sotchi, and takes the poorer visitors there. In an account of the district given by a Russian, it is dismissed with these words: "Khost abounds in magnificent vegetation and fever."

The Black Sea sands are all grey, there is no iron in them, and the stretch of country between Sotchi and Adler is very melancholy in appearance. There is not much pleasure in walking across it, and to live there should be tedious enough. The fever in the air oppresses, the sandy road covered

with loose grass makes the feet lazy, and the only reason that impels one forward is the wish to find a pleasant country beyond.

It was necessary to make a ten-verst detour to cross the river Mzintz. There was supposed to be a ferry at the mouth, but the boat was on the wrong side of the stream, and no cries could wake the ferryman. Perhaps by undressing I might have got across, but the current was swift and the bed stony, so I made the detour. In spring, I am told, the river is tremendous, and there is no horse or boat that can stand against it.

I crossed it by the grandiose iron bridge near the village Pervinka. This bridge is a wonder—something like the Forth Bridge in appearance and design, and yet cast over a stream that in October is no wider than the New River.

Pervinka is a ramshackle hamlet inhabited by Greeks. A mile or so farther on is Moldava, inhabited only by Moldavians. In the Caucasus generally, though there are hundreds of tribes, the villages are not of mixed peoples, and it is possible that one might be called upon to speak five distinctly separate languages at five successive villages, but for the imposed Russian tongue which to some extent is the language of all.

It is only along the strip of the coast that the physically weaker and tamer races live, the Turks, Greeks, Moldavians, Russians. They do not penetrate into the hills where the more dangerous fighting tribes have their abode. The Russian is afraid of strong and daring neighbours. Though he is himself strong, he prefers to live by cunning and smiling rather than by the threat of the knife and the frown

of the brow. That is why he cannot colonise the Caucasus. For the tribesmen will never lay aside the knife, and the Russian will never play fair.

Along the strip of the coast, however, the Russian influence timidly penetrates, and the Russian Empire prevails. All the way from Rostof to Gagri there is no doubt that the territory is Russian, and the life of the villages has been Russianised. For the Greeks and the others are very tame peoples. They easily play the Russian game, and fall in with the socialities and artfulnesses of the Russian earning his living.

The Greeks, of course, are cleaner than the others, and consider themselves a European nation. They take their stand with Italy and France, and not with Turkey and the Caucasus. They think themselves men of the world and cultured, and the others illiterate and savages. Even at the Russian the Greek will sneer.

A well-dressed Greek said to me at Adler—"What do you think of the Russians; not quite civilised, yet, eh?"

"Perhaps not, in some ways," I thought.

"Much barbarism there still, and much stupidity. They employed Japanese engineers at Port Arthur in the year before the war—actually employed spies . . ." I thought the Greeks couldn't boast of much military success in these days, but I said naught. This was before the war in the Balkans.

The Turk is the Greek's *bête noir*. Turks always wear red and Greeks always wear blue; I don't know why, but it seems part of a manifestation of hostility. A Greek in blue and a Turk in red would make very good comic figures in a pantomime.

In Tuapse nearly all the road labourers were

Turks, and the Greeks, so many of whom are small shopkeepers in that town, enjoyed their superiority.

"When will that people begin to learn their letters?" said a Greek to me. "Stupid people, eh, eh—how stupid they are! Just like goats—all they need are. . . ." He put his hands out from his temples to signify horns—and grinned.

The Turks truly are stupid and ugly, and the Greeks are not unhandsome. But the Turk is strong as a bull, and brutal; unsympathetic, reserved. Mahomedans in the Caucasus are generally fierce, but the Turk is mild. He minds his own business and doesn't interfere with you. He sits and smokes his long pipe, and may often be seen with a dingy red fez on his head, outside his cottage in the Black Sea village, squatting on a carpet in the shade, smoking the hookah the evening through; his thoughts and mind and soul removed beyond this world. He thinks, dreams, ruminates, or perhaps does none of these. He just remains as he is like a standing pond, and nothing happens to him except that the clearness of his eyes gets clouded over.

Adler is an unpretentious village, growing to be a town of the type of Tuapse and Sotchi. Being situated low, the heat at mid-day is hard to bear, and many of the Easterns sleep from twelve to three. I began to feel I was getting farther south. I was gaining time on the summer that had long since left Russia.

I like the summer chiefly on the heights; my love is not of the valley. Truly Adler, standing almost below sea-level, was intolerable. I was glad to escape up into the mountain road. I had dinner at a little restaurant, bought by chance some books

KRASNAYA POLYANA, THE GOAL OF MANY SOTCHI EXCURSIONISTS

THE FERRY AT ADLER

and papers to read on the rest of my journey, and in the early afternoon I marched upward and outward at a good five miles an hour, and did not stop till I was far up in the fresh mountain air. Then, at a point of the road where the sun flashes fire on a distant lake, I lay down and slept. About me were the giant mountains, and I was glad of new company. Fresh and thrilling airs crept over me, and all night the land breeze blew, bringing with it life and vigour.

XIII

RUSSIAN JOURNALISM

AFTER a fresh night I arose with such happiness in my veins that I was full of an irresponsible gaiety. The morning awakened in me a wonderful hilarity; my pack had no weight, and my feet pattered on the road hardly touching it, so full of good cheer was my spirit.

A wash in the mountain stream, for the sea was not near. Tea. Then I spread my rug on a little bridge, and laid my books and papers all about. I made myself an open-air room on the mountain side at the feet of gigantic beeches. There, sitting and writing, or walking up and down thinking happy thoughts, I wrote many of these pages. All the time I had a fire going, and my pot was on it. All day the sun shone kindly over the bosom of the forest. It was a day of extraordinary pleasure, and one which, though devoid of incident, I can never forget—altogether the best day's writing out of doors I've ever had. But how quickly the time passed! When it became evening I was amazed; it seemed I had only been an hour or so in my paradise.

Next day I was obliged to come down from the mountains. The day was cloudy. I did not write at all, but, on the contrary, read my Russian papers. Russian journalism is permeated with a spirit of briskness, freshness, and originality that causes it to be much

more diverting than the heavy English newspaper. English people begin to know something of Russian literature, but as yet know nothing of Russian journalism. The subject is worth a whole book to itself, and would make an extremely diverting and instructive volume.

When I was nine years old and had to write an essay on "Kidnapped" as a holiday task, I remember how my father, laying the foundation of my style, bade me never have more than fourteen words in a sentence, and about five sentences in a paragraph. Laboriously as I wrote, I counted out the words, and, as if I were abbreviating telegrams, I lopped my long-winded utterances down to the requisite size. Since then I have always had an interest in the quantitativeness of style.

The style of Russian journalism is most refreshing. The brevity of the sentence and the paragraph has been developed to the absolute. One discerns in it a sort of Henleyism gone mad. The average length of a sentence in many articles is just four words, and of the paragraph two lines. Paragraphs of one word are frequent, sentences of one word amazingly frequent. But when I say that brevity has reached the absolute, the statement may be taken literally; I have actually seen a paragraph which consisted of a dot.

To take as an example, an everyday type of half a column in the *Russkoe Slovo*. I read with gusto the following, and I give it here. I must explain that the journalist's pen had been roused by a prohibition of the flight of the aviator Sablerof, who, it appears, had intended to fly from Sevastopol to St. Petersburg, had got so far as Moscow, and received the plaudits of the crowds of the Kremlin only to be

stopped in his exploit by an order of the police received from the Imperial authority at St. Petersburg. The reason for the prohibition lay in the fact that the authorities were afraid of the aeroplane being used for anarchical purposes.

Sablerof has been stopped . . .

Sablerof has been forbidden to go to Petersburg. Why? In Heaven's name, why?

Why? I ask again.

Why the devil?

Why?

•

But I beg pardon. Of course I am wrong. I must be more polite. In Russia there is a certain order to be observed. I will go to the Governor and say, "I should like to be informed why Litvinof was allowed to go to Petersburg and Sablerof not."

"Then go to the Chancellor of the Air."

Of course we have a Chancellory of the Air now . . .

"And take the trouble to write a petition . . . and then purchase two stamps for seventy-five kopecks . . . and affix them to the petition . . . and have the petition sewn in a canvas cover . . . and read . . . and examined and revised . . . and sealed . . . and sent forward for consideration. . . ."

"And *wait* . . ."

And in seven days I shall get an answer at the respective police station.

That answer is—"What after all has it got to do with you? He was forbidden; that means he was forbidden." And that's an end of it.

Yes, an end. . . .

Henceforward, aviators must apply at the Chancellory of the Air and have their passports viséd.

And the air will be divided into cubes and let out at a nominal rent . . . and policed.

Litvinof forward!

Sablerof stand!

Let the Moscow populace cheer. The foundation has been laid of the authority of the Chancellory of the Air.

Nowadays, take up whatever journal one pleases in the Russian language, it abounds with articles phrased and paragraphed in this style. Everything is short, exclamatory, and conversational; and dots abound. A word about dots—about what Mr. Chesterton calls "dottiness." Dots, I believe, come from Russia originally. They abound in the works of Gorky and Andreef, and are faithfully reproduced in the translations of these authors' works. Many Russian journalists divide a word of one syllable into a word of three syllables by the wedging of dots. Others provide their readers with elliptical puzzles by leaving out the names of eminent persons, and the qualifications of the actions of such persons, and substituting dots. But commonest of all, the journalist uses dots to imply that he has no more words; that his ire, or his contempt, or his wonder has passed out of the river of language and lost itself in an ocean. Dots again imply wistfulness on the part of the journalist; a lisp of hope, an articulation of melancholy, or they imply the curl of the lip in scorn, the pause left for sarcasm to reach home, the uselessness of a question mark when thousands of previous questions so marked have never been answered. In England the printer and editor sometimes fail to understand dots, and print them in a grand space of white paper, a long array of twinkling stars, a constellation. This is altogether missing the mark. Russians would print large and small dots if they could, and graduate them from needle pricks to total eclipses of the page. As it

is, they can only increase or diminish the number of dots. I have seen upon occasion as many as five lines of them.

Often articles open with an arresting and abusive sentence like that of the satire of Juvenal, which begins: "Must I always be listening and never reply?" Such a sentence would, of course, be a paragraph by itself. As I opened *Satirikon*, the Russian *Punch*, this idle day on the road to Gagri, I saw confronting me at the head of the first article, on the first page, the astonishing exhortation—

"Spit in my eye, reader! Spit *right* in my eye!"

There is nothing in English or in American journalism equal to that. But such a sentence is not exceptional. It sets the tone of the paper, and *Satirikon* is read by everyone, from the student to the Grand Duke. Everyone who would not miss something essential in the Russian soul should look at *Satirikon*. It is to the Russians what *Punch* is to us. And never were two journals further apart in tone—nor two nations in soul. Once in Moscow, at Philipof's café, I showed *Satirikon* to an Englishman. He put it away from him with an "Ugh, how horrible!"

There was a magnificent cartoon, magnificent from the Russian point of view, of the German Emperor in full panoply, cutting a naked baby with his sabre precisely down the middle. All Germany was put into the Emperor's expression, and the baby, coloured flesh pink, presented only its little legs and back to the wickedly slicing sabre. It was horrible to the Englishman, but then to a Russian at home the pictures of our island-famous Carruthers-Gould appear tedious beyond words. Yet both the cartoonists, that of the *West-*

minster Gazette, and that of *Satirikon*, are amazingly clever in the eyes of their respective compatriots, for they each reflect a national soul. *Satirikon* is horrible, but it is instructive; it is even powerful and refreshing if you can enter into its spirit without losing your own; it is forceful, brutal, cynical, Rabelaisian.

Occasionally *Satirikon* is obscene; it is never flagrantly so, however, and is never indecent. Despite its monstrous pictures and its style, which permits all things, it is yet a family journal, as *Punch* is. There is nothing in it that the Russian woman finds objectionable.

But I will translate a most diverting article from a copy which I read on the road. It is from the pen of Kouprin, a famous writer of tales and artificer of fireworks. It illustrates the dashing tone of *Satirikon*, and at the same time illustrates a particular theme of this book, the Russian *intelligentia*. He starts off in the approved *Satirikon* style:—

Yes gentlemen, I killed him.

In vain do you try to obtain for me a medical certificate of temporary aberration. I shall not take advantage of it.

I killed him soberly, conscientiously, coldly, without the least regret, fear or hesitation. Were it in your power to resurrect him, I would repeat my crime.

He followed me always and everywhere. He took a thousand human shapes, and did not shrink—shameless creature!—to dress in women's clothes upon occasion. He took the guise of my relative, my dear friend, colleague, good acquaintance. He could dress to look any age, except that of a child (as a child he

only failed and looked ridiculous). He has filled up my life with himself, and poisoned it.

What has been most dreadful was that I have always foreseen in advance all his words, gestures, and actions.

When I met him he would drawl, crushing my hand in his:

"Aha! Whom . do . . I . . see? Dear me! You must be getting on in years now. How's your health?"

Then he would answer as for himself, though I had not asked him anything:

"Thank you. So so. Nothing to boast of. Have you read in to-day's paper? . . ."

If he by any chance noticed that I had a flushed cheek, flushed by the vexation of having met him, he would be sure to croak:

"Eh, neighbour, how red you're getting."

He would come to me just at those moments when I was up to the neck in work, would sit down and say:

"Ah! I'm afraid I've interrupted you."

For two hours he would bore me to death, prattling of himself and his children. He would see I was tearing my hair and biting my lips till the blood came, and would simply delight in my torments.

Having poisoned my working mood for a whole month in advance, he would stand, yawn a little, and then murmur:

"Lord knows why I stay here talking. I've got lots to do."

When I met him in a railway carriage he always began—

"Permit me to ask, are you going far?" And then:

"On business or? . ."

"Where do you work?"

"Married?"

Oh, well do I know all his ways. Closing my eyes I see him. He strikes me on the shoulder, on the back, on the knees. He gesticulates so closely to my eyes and nose that I wince as if about to be struck. Catching hold of the lappet of my coat, he draws himself up to me and breathes in my face. When he visits me he allows his foot to tremble on the floor under the table, so that the shade of the lamp tinkles. At an at home, he thrums on the back of my chair with his fingers, and in pauses of the conversation drawls "y . e . s, y . . . es." At cards he calls out like a town-crier, "Your turn to lead. What is that you lead? A spade. I have an ace. For what will you buy an ace? Forty copecks, not a copeck less."

Start him in an argument, and he always begins by—

"Eh, neighbour, it's humbug you're talking."

"Why humbug?" you ask timidly.

"Because it is nonsense."

What evil have I done to this man? I don't know. He set himself to spoil my existence, and he spoiled it. Thanks to him, I now feel a great aversion from the sea, the moon, the air, poetry, painting, music.

"Tolstoy?"—he bawled vocally, and in print.—"made his estate over to his wife, and he himself . . . Compared with Turgenev, he . . . He sewed his own jack-boots . . . great writer of the Russian earth . . . Hurrah! . . .

"Pushkin? He created the language, didn't he? Do you remember. 'Calm was the Ukraine night, clear was the sky'? You remember what they did to

the woman in the third act. Hsh! there are no ladies present, do you remember?

"In our little boat we go,
Under the little boat the water."

"Dostoevsky . . . have you read how he went one night to Turgenief to confess . . . Gogol, do you know the sort of disease he had?"

Should I go to a picture gallery and stand before some quiet evening landscape, he would be sure to be on my heels, pushing me forward and saying to a girl on his arm:

"Very sweetly drawn . . . distance . . . atmosphere . . . the moon to the life . . . Do you remember Nina —the coloured supplement of the *Niva*[1]—it was something like it . . ."

I sit at the opera listening to *Carmen*. He is there as everywhere. He is behind me, and has his feet on the lower bar of my fauteuil. He hums the tune of the duet in the last act, and through his feet communicates to my nerves every movement of his body. Then in the entr'act I hear him speaking in a voice pitched high enough for me to hear:

"Wonderful gramophone records the Zadodadofs have. Shalapin absolutely. You couldn't tell the difference."

Yes, it was he or someone like him who invented the barrel-organ, the gramophone, the bioscope, the photophone, the biograph, the phonograph, the patephone, the musical box, the pianino, the motor-car, paper collars, oleographs, and newspapers.

There's no getting away from him. I flee away at night to the wild seashore, and lie down in solitude

[1] Russian *Family Herald.*

upon a cliff, but he steals after me in the shadow, and suddenly the silence is broken by a self-satisfied voice which says:

"What a lovely night, Katenka, isn't it? The clouds, eh, look at them! Just as in a picture. And if a painter painted them just like it, who would say it was true to Nature?"

He has killed the best minutes of my life—minutes of love, the dear sweet nights of youth. How often when I have wandered arm in arm with the most beauteous creation of Nature, along an avenue where upon the ground the silver moonlight was in pattern with the shadows of the trees, and he has suddenly and unexpectedly spoken up to me in a woman's voice, has rested his head on my shoulder and cried out in a theatrical tone:

"Tell me, do you love to dream by moonlight?"

Or:

"Tell me, do you love Nature? As for me, I madly adore Nature."

He was many shaped and many faced, my persecutor, but was always the same underneath. He took upon occasion the guise of professor, doctor, engineer, lady-doctor, advocate, girl-student, author, wife of the excise inspector, official, passenger, customer, guest, stranger, spectator, reader, neighbour at a country house. In early youth I had the stupidity to think that these were all separate people. But they were all one and the same. Bitter experience has at last discovered to me his name. It is—the Russian *intelligent.*

If he has at any time missed me personally, he has left everywhere his traces, his visiting cards. On the heights of Barchau and Machuka I have found his

orange peelings, sardine tins, and chocolate wrappings. On the rocks of Aloopka, on the top of the belfry of St. John, on the granites of Imatra, on the walls of Bakhchisari, in the grotto of Lermontof I have found the following signatures and remarks :—

"Pusia and Kuziki 1908 year 27 February."

"Ivanof."

"A. M. Plokhokhostof (Bad-tail) from Saratof."

"Ivanof."

"Pechora girl."

"Ivanof."

"M. D. . . P. A. P. . . Talotchka and Achmet."

"Ivanof."

"Trophim Sinepupof. Samara Town."

"Ivanof."

"Adel Soloveitchik from Minsk."

"Ivanof."

"From this height I delighted in the view of the sea. C. Nicodemus Ivanovitch Bezuprechny."

"Ivanof."

I have read his verses and remarks in all visiting books; and in Pushkin's house, at Lermontof's Cliff, and in the ancient monasteries have read: "The Troakofs came here from Penza, drank kvas and ate sturgeon. We wish the same to you," or "Visited the natal ash-tray of the great Russian poet, Chichkin teacher of caligraphy, Voronezh High School for Boys," or—

> "Praise to thee, Ai Petri, mountain white,
> In dress imperial of fir,
> I climbed up yesterday unto thy height,
> Retired staff-captain Nikoli Profer."

I needed but to pick up my favourite Russian book, and I came upon him at once. "I have read

THE SWALLOW'S NEST. A ROCK OF MANY PICNICS

this book. Pafnutenko." "The author is a blockhead." "Mr. Author hasn't read Karl Marx." I turn over the pages, and I find his notes in all the margins. Then, of course, no one like he turns down corners and makes dog-ears, tears out pages, or drops grease on them from tallow candles.

Gentlemen, judges, it is hard for me to go on. This man had abused, fouled, vulgarised all that was dear to me, delicate and touching. I struggled a long while with myself. Years went by. My nerves became more irritable. I saw there was not room for both of us in the world. One of us had to go.

I foresaw for a long while that it would be just some little trifle that would drive me to the crime. So it was.

You know the particulars. In the compartment there was a crush, the passengers were sitting on one another's heads. He, with his wife, his son, a schoolboy in the preparatory class, and a pile of luggage were occupying four seats. Upon this occasion he was wearing the uniform of the Department of Popular Education. I went up to him and asked:

"Is there not a free seat here?"

He answered like a bulldog with a bone, not looking at me:

"No. This seat is taken by another gentleman. These are his things. He'll be back in a minute."

The train began to move.

I waited, standing, where I was. We went on about ten miles. The gentleman didn't come. I was silent, and I looked into the face of the pedagogue, thinking that there might be in him yet some gleam of conscience.

But no. We went another fifteen miles. He got

down a basket of provisions and began to eat. He went out with a kettle for hot water, and made himself tea. A little domestic scandal arose over the sugar for the tea.

"Peter, you've taken a lump of sugar on the sly!"

"Word of honour, by God, I haven't. Look in my pockets, by God."

"Don't swear, and don't lie. I counted them before we set out, on purpose. . . . There were eighteen, and now there are seventeen."

"By God!!"

"Don't swear. It is shameful to lie. I will forgive you everything, only tell me straight out the truth. But a lie I can never forgive. Only cowards lie. One who is capable of lying is capable of murdering, stealing, of betraying his king and his country. . . ."

So he ran on, and ran on. I had heard such utterances from him in my earliest childhood when he was my governess, afterwards when he was my class teacher, and again when he wrote in the newspaper.

I interrupted.

"You find fault with your son for lying, and yet you yourself have in his presence told a whopping lie. You said this seat was occupied by a gentleman. Where is that gentleman? Show him to me."

The pedagogue went purple, and his eyes dilated.

"I beg you, don't interfere with people who don't interfere with you. Mind your own business. How scandalous! Conductor, please warn this passenger that he will not be allowed to interfere with other people in the railway carriage. Please take measures, or I'll report the matter to the gendarme, and write in the complaint book."

The conductor screwed up his eyes in a fatherly

expression, and went out. But the pedagogue went on, unconsoled—

"No one speaks to you, no one was interfering with you. Good Lord, a decent looking man too in a hat and a collar, clearly one of the intelligentia . . . A peasant now, or a workman . . . but no, an intelligent!"

Intel-li-gent! The executioner had named me executioner! It was ended . . . He had pronounced his own sentence.

I took out of the pocket of my overcoat a revolver, examined the charge, pointed it at the pedagogue between the eyes, and said calmly:

"Say your prayers."

He turned pale and shrieked—

"Guard-d-d! . . ."

That was his last word. I pulled the trigger.

I have finished, gentlemen. I repeat: I do not repent. There is no sorrow for him in my soul. One desolating doubt remains, however, and it will haunt me to the end of my days should I finish them in prison or in an asylum.

He has a son left! What if he takes on his father's nature?

XIV

GAGRI

I PACKED my knapsack again and put my miscellaneous literature back into it, to take it out another day perhaps. It was necessary to get on towards Gagri; it was perhaps even more necessary to find a suitable place in which to spend the night.

Alas! the road went downward to the seashore, and crept along malarial levels. Not that there is much danger to the tramp in malaria. I think out-of-door people don't stand in danger of the fever. But malarial levels mean dew, dampness, cold. I found so cold a place to lie in that after an hour of it I was obliged to give it up; I tried another, and gave that up; tried lying on the broad stump of a hewn tree, but that was impossible, and finally made a couch of a wilted grass patch under a hayrick shelter. It was still cold, but I slept.

Next morning I lay on a cliff in the sun, for after a ten-mile walk I came to a region of rocks and hills once more. I was at Pilenki, a most beautiful little village by the side of a wonderful sea.

The road thence to Gagri, along the verge of a steep cliff, is perhaps the most glorious on the Black Sea shore. The road never leaves the cliff edge; on the right hand stretches the vast ocean, and on the left the sheer cliff climbs upward to an indeterminate height. There is no shore between you and the sea,

the waves beat constantly on the rocks. As you look out in the full glory of mid-day the sea seems to have actually a sunburn, its undulations are the colour of the wing cases of many sun-beetles. For the rest, it is a quiet, happy road. There are few houses, no villages, but forest in plenty from the highway to the sky.

The cliff along which the road is made develops into a short mountain range, a spur of the great Caucasus, and by the time Gagri has been reached, it shows itself as an immense wall between earth and heaven. No north wind is ever felt at the foot of that wall, and that is why modern Gagri, the health resort, has been built there.

But this great natural wall is virtually a wall, and when I cross to the other side of it I am geographically in Asia, in Trans-Caucasia. This shoulder of the Caucasus rises from the sea bottom at Pilenki, and is sheer from the waves: there is, as I have said, no shore. It travels south-eastward, slowly departing from the sea and gradually leaving a shore once more. It makes an angle of thirty degrees with the coast line, and at twelve miles from Pilenki there is just room for Gagri between it and the shore. After Gagri the space widens and widens till there is a great reed-covered malarial marsh in between. In the ancient past, Mithridates had sway south of this natural wall, and he fortified it against the north.

Gagri is beautiful. I was agreeably surprised by it, for the northern health resorts had been so wretched. Certainly among all the Black Sea watering places it stands out as part of another country. It is small, orderly, well built. Its background is this marvellous wall, tree-covered from base to summit, tree-fringing on the sky. It is a great theatre full of trees, from

gallery to pit, and from all the circles the trees look out over the southern sea. The houses are all among the trees, and looking at the place from a mile out to sea, there is little of Gagri to be seen. But from the main street one looks up to many white castellated villas, built high on the sides of the great wall, and perched as it were like dovecots. At the north end of the village, from over the very summit of the cliff, rushes a lovely river and plunges headlong downward, a long writhing tangle of white foam.

Between the foot of the forest-cliffs and the sea is a strip of land and shore not more than seventy yards broad, a sunny little ledge looking southward. This strip is made beautiful—as opposed to the rest of Nature, which is beautiful in itself—by a prettily laid-out park. Here are gorgeous flowers and shrubs of tropical climes all labelled as at the *Jardin des plantes;* a gay fountain rises and sprays upon a lawn; the foaming Gagri River, civilised into canals and decoyed into channels, meanders about the flower-beds and the walks. Every garden seat has a shelter over it of vines and creepers. There are festooned seats looking seaward in such a way that the occupants of the seats cannot be seen except by taking some trouble: fine seats for poets and lovers, and there are many of both at Gagri.

Gagri is a haunt of the aristocracy. Handsome Russian women and gentle-looking officers walk up and down the gardens. Ancient-looking, gouty generals are to be heard talking of matters only of interest at the capital, or to those of the capital. Here live the Baroness of Oldenburg and her husband, of the blood-royal; and all the courtiers circle about them in the absence of the Tsar. But even his Imperial Majesty

THE DONKEY TRAM WITH LETTER-BOX ATTACHED

NEAR PILENKI. A PLEASANT SPOT FOR REPOSING AND WRITING

the Emperor Nicholas II. comes here upon occasion, sailing safely in the royal yacht *Shtandart;* and indeed Gagri is a happy place for the Imperial family, happier even than Yalta, that they so commonly frequent—happier, because safer from the dangers of the knife and the bomb. Gagri is very far away from the haunts of the disaffected, and it is possible to allow the Tsarevitch to go about almost as if he were an ordinary child.

Gagri has a wonderful sixth-century church, standing grey and ancient among cypress trees. It has ruins of the old Mithridatian wall, which visitors poke with sticks and soldiers with their swords, demonstrating how the cement is still like iron, though it is two thousand years old. Gagri is a place charming by its nature, its artifice, and its ruin.

It has also a life of its own. There are many large hotels, and a great hydro, whence at evening comes the sound of orchestral music. Round about the little market-place are high many-storied wooden dwellings, all verandahs and doors and windows, unpainted and staring, and looking like some sort of Noah's ark. These constitute a soldiers' barracks, a restaurant and lodging-house for workmen, an electricity works, what not. And to and fro plies a little one-horse tramcar behind which is fastened the town pillar-box. When I saw the car it was drawn by a little donkey, and looked very comical. It is certainly amusing to have a moving pillar-box — one never knows where to find it. You wait for the mountain to come to Mahomet, and then suddenly in a moment of abstraction, not only has the mountain come but it has gone, and if you want to post your letter you must be after it as fast as you can.

XV

THE LOWER INTELLIGENTIA

"A VERY strange story, that of Kouprin's in the *Satirikon*," I thought to myself, opening my knapsack to take the journal out to read once more, strange that a famous Russian writer, beloved of the students and of the intelligentia itself, should so write of the intelligentia! A few years ago no one would have dreamed of writing such a story, of letting escape such a gasp of exasperation against literate Russia. The intelligentia have always been considered by the national writers to be the cream of Russia. The Nezhdanofs, Mariannas, Rudins, Bazarofs, the Raskolnikofs, Karamazofs, have held the field; they were the people who counted, about whom it was worth while to write. But to-day, through the eyes of Kouprin, we see for a moment an intelligentia that it is necessary to attack and expose, and certainly not to approve.

I think I can say what has happened. Russia has become aware of the birth of the lower middle class—that despair-giving class which claims and takes to itself fifty per cent. of the babies that are born each day just now, the class of Europe's future.

The old intelligentia has not perished, but its parasite has begun to be as big as itself. The parasite is the bourgeois who has begun to say in no uncertain voice what he likes to read, what he likes to hear in

music, what he likes in pictures, what he likes in life. Here we have the new intelligentia; the lower, but in the long run more powerful intelligentia. When the class realises itself as a power in the state, it will be called the democracy, and the good idea of democracy will be attacked on its account, for democracy is easily taken to mean the voice of a class instead of the voice of all the people, or the rule of all the people.

The Russian bourgeois is of this sort; he wants to know the price of everything. Of things which are independent of price he knows nothing, or, if he knows of them, he sneers at them and hates them. Talk to him of religion, and show that you believe in the mystery of Christ; talk to him of life, and show that you believe in love and happiness; talk of woman, and show that you understand anything about her unsexually; talk to him of work, and show that though you are poor you have no regard for money—and the bourgeois is uneasy. He would like to deny your existence there as you face him. He will deny your faith and belief the moment your back is turned.

A bourgeois said to me at Moscow, "There is no man who is chaste." I mentioned to him Nicholas, the boy-student who lived with me there.

"You think so," said he, "but even he has his promiscuous flirtations.

"But," I said, "I live with him. I share a room with him. I know all his thoughts. He is not even interested in women as women."

The bourgeois shrugged his shoulders.

He had been inspecting a girl's school one day, and he spoke of a girl who had had some unfortunate love affair, and had taken methylated spirit the day

before. The girl was about fifteen and nearly in the top class.

"There is not a girl in that class," said he, "who would blush at an indecency."

"But surely," said I, "many of the girls come from pure homes; many have true ideals; there are many of them who will be beautiful women."

Then my bourgeois friend let his evil imagination have play, and he depicted what he would like to think the girls were like secretly. How strange it is that the sensual describe not what they know or what they believe to be the truth, but what they would like. When a woman is serene and beautiful as Diana, they like to say to others that she is loose of virtue, though they know for certain in themselves that they are uttering a falsehood. It need hardly be said that such a man is of the type that calls aloud for literature like the *Kreutzer Sonata* and Artsibashef's *Sanin.* He tells me that when his three little daughters are twelve years of age he is going to tell them all the facts of life. And Vera, aged nine, said to me one day, "Is it true, Mr. Graham, that this glassful of water contains thousands and thousands of beasts, and that I am full of beasts because I drink it?"

"My goodness, no!" I said.

"But father says so. He says there are thousands, and he would like to show them me; but though I can't see them they are there all the same."

"O Lord my God!" I thought. "She means microbes. This is a new belief in the unseen; a belief in the unseen and non-existent abomination."

The bourgeois' literature centres round the sex problem, round the probable unchastity of women; his religion is in trade, money, and feasting. As I

said, he wants to know the price of everything. If you take off your overcoat, he wants to know the price of your trousers; if you undress to go to bed, he asks you what your underlinen cost. In a train an utter stranger will commonly feel the material of your dress, and ask what you paid for it. If you wear a ring, what did you pay for it: he could never understand a ring used as a sacred token. If you arrive at his house in a cab, how much did you pay the cabman, by how much did you beat him down, by how much do you think he cheated you? He swallows money, digests money, lives in an atmosphere of money such as one knows nothing of in England.

Next to money, as a sort of god to which money must be sacrificed, he worships his stomach. The master of the house makes his true meditation with the cook as priest, when he arranges the *menu* in the morning. Dinner is the chief service of the day, and is performed with gorgeous rites. In the Russian bourgeois' home the dining-room is by far the most important apartment, and that most occupied. Its furniture is a long table and many chairs; in the background is a glass-doored *buffet*, full of conserves and liqueurs; the walls have a frieze of grape tangles and dead partridges, the table is always laid, and at any hour of the day or night a visitor is brought there, and at any hour for his benefit is set in motion a great jangling, blaring gramophone, whose trumpet is poised and levelled like the cannon of a man-of-war.

The gramophone is his delight. I met a couple at Moscow who actually danced and invited their guests to dance polkas round the dining-table to the music of the gramophone. And the bourgeois families have so impressed themselves as a class that

they have called down persecution on themselves in St. Petersburg, where the gramophone-playing after 10 P.M. has been forbidden by the police.

The gramophone is an index of taste; by its aid Shalapin and Sobinof may be heard marvellously cheaply. There is therefore no further need for these great singers to perform in public. The bourgeois will, however, go to hear these celebrities if they come to his town, for they have been boomed, and the price of the seat is an index of the depth of the pocket, and the means of social vanity. It is not to the music of Sobinof that you sit down to dinner with M. le Bourgeois, but to Lehar, the composer of musical comedies which are liked equally by the bourgeois of five nations.

Instead of opera, the gramophone; instead of the theatre, the cinematograph; instead of national literature, the cheap translation; instead of national life, a miserable imitation of modern English life. By the way, be it said, the imitation of England by Russia is by no means the sort that is the best flattery. Our English national pulse is hardly quickened by the fact that the Russian bourgeois thinks the so-called *smoking*, the smoking jacket, to be evening dress; that he dances in a smoking jacket, and thinks he is quite English. The mania for things English is a privilege of those who can pay double prices for our smartness; it is simply an expensive taste in dress. Unfortunately for Russia, it is anti-national, and such snobbery as adopting English harness, and dressing the coachman like an English groom, is only loss.

The peril is that the bourgeois class is recognising its power, and claiming to be the educated class as opposed to the peasants, the uneducated; to be the

wise of the nation as opposed to the cultured, the "over-educated." It is beginning to clamour in the press, to write, to define, to censure. It calls itself the democracy, and points out that it will pay for its likes, and that its sort of art and life will "pay." That a thing "pays" is to the bourgeois the test of democratic approval. By the force of this democratic approval it is putting the older intelligentia to the wall, it is turning out the national literature for what is in editorial slang called the "sky-blue romance." Russia cannot produce what it wants; the Russian author, be he novelist, play-wright, or poet, is naturally a seeker, a national dreamer; he won't do. Forward the foreigner, Shaw, Jerome, Wells: it is astonishing, but such is the power of the Russian bourgeois that these three English authors are now almost as much read in Russia as in England. The borrowing is, however, temporary; the bourgeois have found their great man in *Artsibashef*, a man who wrote the most scandalous novel about the ulterior intentions and thoughts of men and women in one another's company—*Sanin*, a book that swept Russia as no other book has done in any country in Europe. Fortunately the Russian censor stopped it, when it had been published six months.

Literary Russia is now stagnant. This is due to the fact that the intelligentia, aided by the spirit of the West, is in steady conflict with the national spirit. The artificial literature of the sex-problem and the political idea is at war with the natural literature that takes its rise in the peasantry and the national life. Neither will give way. Perhaps in the work of Leonid Andreef the conflict is most to be felt. Andreef would be one of the great writers of Europe but for the fact

that he has the bourgeois in his mind, and is always compromising between what he is inspired to write, and what the public wants. Alas for Russia, if the bourgeois succeed! The tyranny of the bourgeois is the worst of all tyrannies; under it the spirit of the peasantry will be depraved. Already in some places, the peasants go more to the cinematograph than to church!

It may be thought that there is little harm in the commercialisation of the Russian peasant, the secularising of his life; and that after all the bourgeois population of England, France, and Germany is not so bad as not to be on the way to something better. But that would be a mistake; if once the Russian nation becomes thoroughly perverted, it will be the most treacherous, most vile, most dangerous in Europe. For the perverted Russian all is possible; it is indeed his favourite maxim, borrowed he thinks from Nietzsche, that "all is permitted," and by "all" he means all abomination, all fearful and unheard of bestiality, all cruelty, all falsity, all debauch. The bourgeois even now says to the peasant in effect, "Bring your peasant bodies here into the towns, and suck out of them the pleasure that your ancestors, who did not know how to live, have left in them!" I am not pamphleteering against the Russian. I say it out of my love for the simple peasant; the modern movement is damnation.

The curse of Russia, and, as the years go on, the increasing curse, is the *bourgeoisie*, the lower middle class, aware of itself articulately as the lower intelligentia. It is forming everywhere in the towns as a result of the commercial development of the nation. They are worse than the English middle class, worse than the Forsytes, because they wish to be considered

national. They are of the race who "limerick" and treasure-hunt, but are not occupied so innocently. In politics they call themselves Liberals, though they have no notion of true Liberalism, they are seldom Socialists or Radicals, but are abusive of those in authority. They are unwilling, however, to sacrifice anything, or take any risks for political ends. Through them the *revolution* failed; they would have liked the revolution to have succeeded, but as they had not the faith of the true revolutionaries, they waited to see who would win. Selfish as it is possible to be, crass, heavy, ugly, unfaithful in marriage, unclean, impure, incapable apparently of understanding the good and the true in their neighbours and in life—such is the Russian bourgeois.

XVI

HOPE FOR A NEW NATIONAL ART

IT is not thirty miles from Gagri to Cape Pitsoonda and the ancient monastery there, but very few visitors to Gagri ever go to see it. This is partly because there is no road thither, and partly because the steamboat does not call. Yet one would have thought the journey would be worth while to most people who had love for their native land, for at Pitsoonda is a fine old monastery with the simplest peasant-monk life, and one of the oldest cathedrals of the Orthodox Church. But, no—Pitsoonda is poor; it has no show, no attraction, it has not been made famous as New Athos has; and no one thinks it worth while to hire a felucca and sail along to it.

It shows the typical lack of interest of the rich Russian in any part of his native land which is out of view of his town residence, his *datcha*, or his hotel. One might ask the question, How can Russia become great nationally, whilst almost all who are not peasants are not interested to see their own country?

The ex-priest Petrof, a great force in contemporary Russian thought, has pointed out very truly, that Russian literature is now failing because the literary men are out of touch with Russia. Gorky has failed to write anything worth reading in recent years, because he lives on a barren rock in Capri. Andreef has failed because he sits in his study in his town

THE CHURCH AT GAGRI

lodging, and imagines everything. In order to write for Russia, it is necessary to go into Russia. This struck me as very true. It is on a par with the advice Chekhof gave those who wished to write—to travel a little more third class. A new Russian literature is the gift which the peasant has in store for the man of genius; but the man of genius must go to the peasant to obtain it.

It might be thought that too much stress was laid on the literary aspect of Russia's present anti-nationalism. Not at all. It is supremely necessary for Russia now in its new state, after the war and the revolution, that she find a clear voice. A great novelist expresses the nation to itself; his voice is the one that makes the nation aware of itself as a unity, that makes all members brothers and sisters in the nation. Dostoievsky did this for Russia last. Tolstoy being not national, but only European, led Russia astray. Russia only knows herself less through Tolstoy's writing.

Gorky did splendid work as a tramp-novelist, and his *Foma Gordyeef* and *Three Men* are the best novels Russia has produced for twenty years. The point of view is often what Nietzsche called "a frog-perspective," seen from below looking upward, but on the whole there speaks an extraordinary knowledge and love of Russia in his writings. It needed another great man to look after Gorky and help him; for Gorky was altogether on wrong lines in writing so familiarly of immorality. It was not necessary for so great a man as Gorky to write in every book things which pervert the interest of the reader. He did not need the readers who read him because he was improper. He could have been the voice of the

people, and at the same time the hope and light of Russia, if only his sublime idealism could have emerged clear and shining from the ugliness and superfluity of his realism.

Gorky was Russia's last hope. Nothing national has appeared since his day. And until the time when Russia shall say again that England, France, Germany are rotten, empty, and old, until she looks into herself once more, she will fail to have a literature, and will fail to feel herself living as a nation.

I suppose the perversion of taste in Russia is partly due to the action of a few publishers who have issued broadcast, at twopence a volume, translations of all the popular books of Europe. It is now easier to get a volume of W. W. Jacobs' tales at a bookstall than a volume of Chekhof. Every author first class, second class, third class, seems to have been translated into Russian. Even Oscar Wilde's works are twopence a volume, and are to be seen everywhere.

One day at Vladikavkaz I was calling upon some friends, and a little girl of twelve came in and curtseyed. She was in her school uniform, and all Russian girls are taught to curtsey when introduced to their elders. "Ah!" said the host, "here comes our little Englishwoman; she will talk to you; she has read many English books—haven't you Maroosia?"

"Oh!" said I. "Do you like English stories?"

"Yes," said Maroosia.

"Who is your favourite author?" I asked.

"Oscar Wilde," she replied.

I was amazed. But the answer was not only for herself; it was, in a way, what the whole of modern Russia might have answered. I remember a story

that was told me lately, that gives just the same answer put more explicitly.

A child of nine to English governess: "Which do you like best, England or Russia?"

Governess: "England, of course."

Child, after a pause: "I also do not like my native land very much."

What is to be said of a nation whose children are beginning to say such things?

At the moment of writing, Oscar Wilde is the most popular author in Russia, not excluding any writer in the Russian language. For one who knows Tolstoy thoroughly, there are ten who know Wilde. Young ladies sleep with Wilde's works under their pillows, and call *Dorian Grey* their Bible. After Wilde, the most popular contemporary English authors are Jerome K. Jerome, H. G. Wells, Kipling, Shaw, Jack London. Galsworthy also is much read. Jerome is taught in schools as if he were a classic. It is very strange that one author whose writings might be thought likely to please the Russian taste for fantasy, and at the same time lead to truth, is almost unknown in Russia—G. K. Chesterton. It is perhaps because Chesterton is naturally and literally English, and detests cosmopolitanism. His works are inscrutable, whilst those of the other lover of paradox and mystification, G. B. Shaw, are clear as day. Shaw is a sort of second-cousin of Wilde and a step-child of Tolstoy. When he was introduced in Russia it seemed everyone had had his thoughts before. After Nietzsche had swept the intelligentia off its feet, it was necessary to forget pure Nietzscheanism, and it was pleasant to forget in the more easy doctrines of *Man and Superman.* Nietzsche said it

was necessary for man to live nobly, in isolation, in danger, in freedom. Shaw took the responsibility off the man's shoulders, and put it on those of the women. This suited the majority of Russians very well, made the women more interesting, and eccentric manners of courtship or flirtation more possible.

There is, however, in Russia a higher intelligentia, quiet but powerful, a class of cultured men and women living a life apart from the hurly-burly, finding their orbit in the Church and in the national life. They are to be found all over Russia to-day, and it is to them we must look for the voice which shall make Russia one. The capital of this national Russia is Kief, as opposed to St. Petersburg the official capital, and Moscow the economic and commercial one. Kief is the mediæval Canterbury or Rome of Russia. There, as in the Middle Ages, great painters are even now engaged in the painting of church pictures, ikon astases, frescoes. St. Vladimir's Cathedral, the wonder of Russia, is adorned from apse to font with the paintings of Nesterof and Vasnetsof—pictures which can only be compared with the work of Titian and Raphael. The marvellous thing is that these great Russian painters are still young men, and are already working, just where they should be, in the churches and in the service of the Highest—not for vulgar galleries or for rich men who can pay a price, but for a nation and for God.

Then, whilst the new Russian people finds expression in the paintings of Nesterof, Vasnetsof, Vrubel, Pereplotchikof, and others, it finds its literature in the poetry of Balmont, Blok, and Sologub. Painting in Russia is now swerving from what is called "post-impressionism" to national idealism, and young artists

much more than young literary men are to be found in the villages and in the village churches, looking at the dance on the village-green and even taking part in it, looking at the church processions and living with the peasantry. Russian art begins to be more national than any other modern art in Europe, for it realises that only by being national is it possible to be at once original and true.

Then, not only do the painters and poets of the new national art exist, but also the people receiving their works and delighting in them. This is the beginning of things. Already the new art has a church; soon it will have a nation.

XVII

WHAT THE MONKS THINK

I HAVE set down most of the thoughts that occupied my mind as I tramped the desolate thirty miles to Pitsoonda, meeting no one all the way till late at night, when the full moon was radiant over the sea, and I came to the far cape and claimed hospitality of the monks. In leaving Gagri I left the region colonised agriculturally by Russians. South of Gagri nearly all the estates are held, or at least worked, by Caucasian tribesmen, Mingrelians and Abkhasians. The whole country is considered unsafe, for no order is kept and the natives are very treacherous. For the rest, the farther south the more is fever prevalent, if not in actual fact, at least by repute; and except at the watering places, Sukhum, Otchemchiri, and Poti, no Russian is very ready to risk his body in a country house. It should be added that the streams are all defiled through the rotting of the papyrus, and that even boiled water has a somewhat unpleasant action on weak stomachs.

When I arrived at Pitsoonda Cape, I sought out the monastery, and had only to ask shelter to be received with gladness, no passport asked, no questions. I was taken to a cell by a novice, who called to my aid another of the brethren who kept the keys of the pantry. Whilst I ate my supper the young peasant monk sat by me and talked. He

at least was truly Russian, for he was quite indifferent to the fact that I was English; or perhaps secretly he was a trifle disposed to think of me as a dangerous person, for the Abbot, as I learned afterwards, took the English to be synonymous with the Freemasons, and spoke of them as if they in themselves constituted the Antichrist.

But I asked my new-found acquaintance about the Abkhasian tribesmen, and as the subject was harmless, and by my appearance and manners I was a Christian, he quite lost any doubt he might have had about me, and launched forth in this style.

"They are mostly Christians now, owing to our influence. We stand here as the most important institution in the world; they never come into contact with anything else—except when they are called to be soldiers, and many escape even that. They used to be Mahomedans when the Turks ruled here and our great cathedral was a mosque, but now they are Christians. Still they can't consummate their faith, that is the pity; they confess Christ and bow themselves a little, but they don't understand what it means. They know how to cross themselves, but they don't know why they do it. They stand before the pictures and make the sign, or come to church and imitate other people, but it's only a new superstition. You see their language is so different from ours. Isn't it strange! They don't speak Russian naturally. When you go into one of their villages it's like going into another country. Somehow they can't learn our language; it doesn't fit their tongue. Their own language is impossible for us; we could never learn it. It is a *ptichy yazik*, a bird's language, all whistles, croaks, hootings, spittings

—funny, isn't it—all swallowings, splutterings, hee-haws . . . flith-up-peeckstkup. . . . "

This amused me immensely, and I laughed very gaily over my supper.

"Like this," I suggested, and I recited a verse of Kipling's:

> "He hasn't got no medals nor rewards
> . . . "

"Just so," said the novice, and I realised that he wasn't used to foreign languages, and that if I had recited French or German he would have answered just the same.

"How long have you been here?" I asked.

"Nine years."

"But you are still a youngster."

"I came when I was ten years old, and worked for the fathers."

"And will you remain here always?"

"No; next year I go with Father Jeronym to Mount Athos.[1] But God may alter my destiny. This is a strange year, and nobody knows for certain what is going to happen. Annunciation and Easter fall on the same day, and it was predicted long ago that when that happened the dreadful Judgment was at hand. Already the war has commenced, which will finish at the end of the world."

I supposed that by the war he meant the war between Italy and Turkey. I asked him what he thought of the struggle for Tripoli, and found him a warm partisan of Italy, as of Christians against Maho-

[1] Mount Athos, which is now, as a result of the war between the Turks and the Slavs, to be proclaimed an ecclesiastical republic. The monasteries Pitsoonda and New Athos, both of which I visited, are affiliated to that of Mount Athos, and the monks often exchange cells.

medans. He had evidently been brought up to regard Turkey as the natural religious enemy.

Apropos of the Last Judgment, I remembered a paragraph in one of my newspapers, and I plucked it out and asked him what he thought of it. As I found he read but poorly, I looked over his arm and read it with him—

"The Antichrist is near; it grows. The kingdom of the Devil is at hand. It is almost superfluous to point out the signs. We are falling away from the Orthodoxy, we guard not the Holy Church and the Tsar. We are overswept by Western unrighteousness. Roman Catholicism has appeared in Russia, and it is in itself deadly sin, as you know. Because of Catholicism came the destruction of St. Pierre, the sea and the bowels of the earth trembling before the evil doings of man. Because of Catholicism Messina was destroyed. Have you heard of the great floods in France and Austria? Have you heard of that fearful monster lately come out of the earth, the size of a five-storey house? The mysterious sea-serpent is now already swimming in the ocean in readiness for its duties on the Last Day and the Dreadful Judgment. There are storms on the Volga, plague in Astrakhan and Kherson, cholera in St. Petersburg and Rostof . . ."

The journalist had meant to mock, but the novice took it quite seriously. "It's true enough," said he; "the signs are everywhere."

"But many people have thought that before," I urged. "All the early Christians believed that the Second Coming was close at hand. That is how they were enabled to lay such strong foundations for the Church; money, fame, and worldly ambition lost all

their attraction, and even sin was scarcely worth the while of the most short-sighted man. Every one thought that St. John would live until the Second Coming. But St. John died, and the whole early Church passed away. There came other predictions, and many people believed again, but again the predictions failed."

"I know," said the novice. "Even here in the Caucasus, and especially beyond Tiflis, there are many German families and settlements of people, the descendants of those who believed the Last Day was at hand, gave up their worldly goods, and set out for the Holy Land."

"I haven't heard that before," said I. "Why did they remain in the Caucasus?"

"When they came they found Turkey was at war with Russia, and they couldn't get any farther. They had to wait till peace was restored, and by that time the day of the prediction went by, and they remained to be colonists. They said the land was better than their own in Germany, so they settled there."

"And don't you think you'll be disappointed in your expectation, just the same as they were?"

"No," said the boy cheerfully—he was no more than a boy. "We pray, and, if it be God's will to judge the world now, we are ready; and if not, then I shall go to Mount Athos across the sea."

Towards the end of this conversation one of the older monks had come in, and he sat on my bed regarding us rather gloomily.

"You said you were English," said he. "You are not a Jew, I suppose?"

"Oh no," I replied with a smile.

"I only ask because Jews have no shame, and

though you don't look like one, we must keep our eyes open, especially since the assassination of Stolypin."

The cellarer had brought me a large stoup of wine of a very harsh order, the monks' own vintage. So I offered the new-comer a glass. He cheered up visibly. The novice went away at the sound of a bell in the corridor, and we were left to talk of Jews. Evidently the Jew was the *bête noir* of my acquaintance.

"They ought not to be allowed any education at all, and ought to be employed simply as labourers," said he. "They have no religion, they have only politics."

"Yes," said I with a smile, "the only thing they seriously believe in is trade, business. Here in Russia their business is hampered, and so they work politically for freedom—freedom for more trade—not freedom for more life or for a truer religion, but freedom for more mammon-worship. With you, however, the Jews obtain comparatively little success. With us they are unchecked. They hold the highest places in the state."

"The English are in a dangerous way," replied the monk. "I have heard the Church is likely to fall. The Freemasons are at work there as in France. There is a conspiracy among the Masons and the Jews to overthrow the state-recognition of the Church. They wish to make the Church an entirely personal matter, and they think that in that way they will take a great step towards defeating the Church. What do the Jews want in the end of ends?"

"Power, I suppose."

"Power for what?"

I confessed I couldn't say. The Jew himself

doesn't consider the matter deeply. He knows he wants power and wealth; that's about the end of it. The monk helped himself freely to the wine, and called to the cellarer to bring a fresh supply.

"Power," said he, "power and nothing more, just as Satan wished power in heaven, power and nothing more; he wished to put himself even above the Almighty. The Jew is the spirit of Satan on earth —the Jews are the hosts of Satan, and Satan will lead them on the Last Day."

"The Devil was a Jew, you think?"

"I don't know what he was. He is a Jew to-day. He is a Jew in Russia. We don't want Jews and their money-lending and financing and dividend-making. We want quiet agriculture, the Holy Church, simple peasants, the Russian Tsar, the Russian language, Russian customs."

My new acquaintance was getting much excited; he had risen to go out of the cell on some business, but could not tear himself away from his favourite subject. The door was open, and whenever he uttered anything emphatic, he walked swiftly out at the door, and I thought he was gone finally, but in two seconds he was back again, with another idea about the Jews.

"We monks," said he, "till the land and make our own bread. We have our own vineyards and press our own wine. We have our own cows and sheep—we are by no means idle. All this land near the monastery is developed by us, and we keep ourselves and sustain the poor tribesmen round about. Well, a year and a half ago, a man discovered coal on our estate, and actually gathered capital to develop the land. Where did he get the money? From

the foreign Jews. What does Russia want with coal?"

I suggested it might be thought useful in the case of a railway running from Batum along the coast. "Are they going to work the coal then?" I concluded.

"No. There are soldiers guarding the place now. The coal is very easily obtained, and there has been much said against our action in the papers, I believe, but the land is Government land, and the authorities have refused to let it. Quite right too. We don't want industrialism. We want more agriculture. What happens when a mine is begun anywhere? The people all cease going to church. They drink more than ever before, swear, cut one another's throats, become revolutionaries, and think the Tsar is to blame for their unhappiness when the real enemy is the owner of the coal-mine, the Jew whose money is running the mine."

"You are very hostile to the Jews," said I deliberately. "It is strange. Is not their God the same as yours? I know they have not Christ, but is not their God the same?"

"What!" said he with a shriek, "the Russian God like the God of Isaac, Abraham, and Moses! Never."

XVIII

RUSSIAN IMPERIAL POLICY

NEXT day I knelt in the great Cathedral built by Justinian, an exact replica of St. Sophia at Constantinople. I wandered afterwards among the ruins of the ancient fort of Pitius. At mid-day I set out on my journey once more.

The Abbot had advised me to wait for a felucca to take me to Gudaöut, but I was informed that a felucca might sail to-morrow, or next month, according to the weather; and as there was a swell on the sea I decided not to wait.

I was, however, rather in a quandary; the tramp along the shore was almost impracticable owing to the fact that the sea beat on the rocks in many places, and except at low tide there was no passage. On the other hand, there was no road from Pitsoonda to the highway ten miles northward. The distance was not far, but there was no very distinct track; the district was wild, the mountains high, and rivers many. I had had a most heavy day on the loose sand and shingle coming from Gagri, so I decided to cross the mountains rather than try to compass the difficulties of the shore. I set off to cross whatever mountains there might be and swim the rivers; but I had not gone four miles when, foreseeing trouble with the natives, I changed my mind and returned to Pitsoonda.

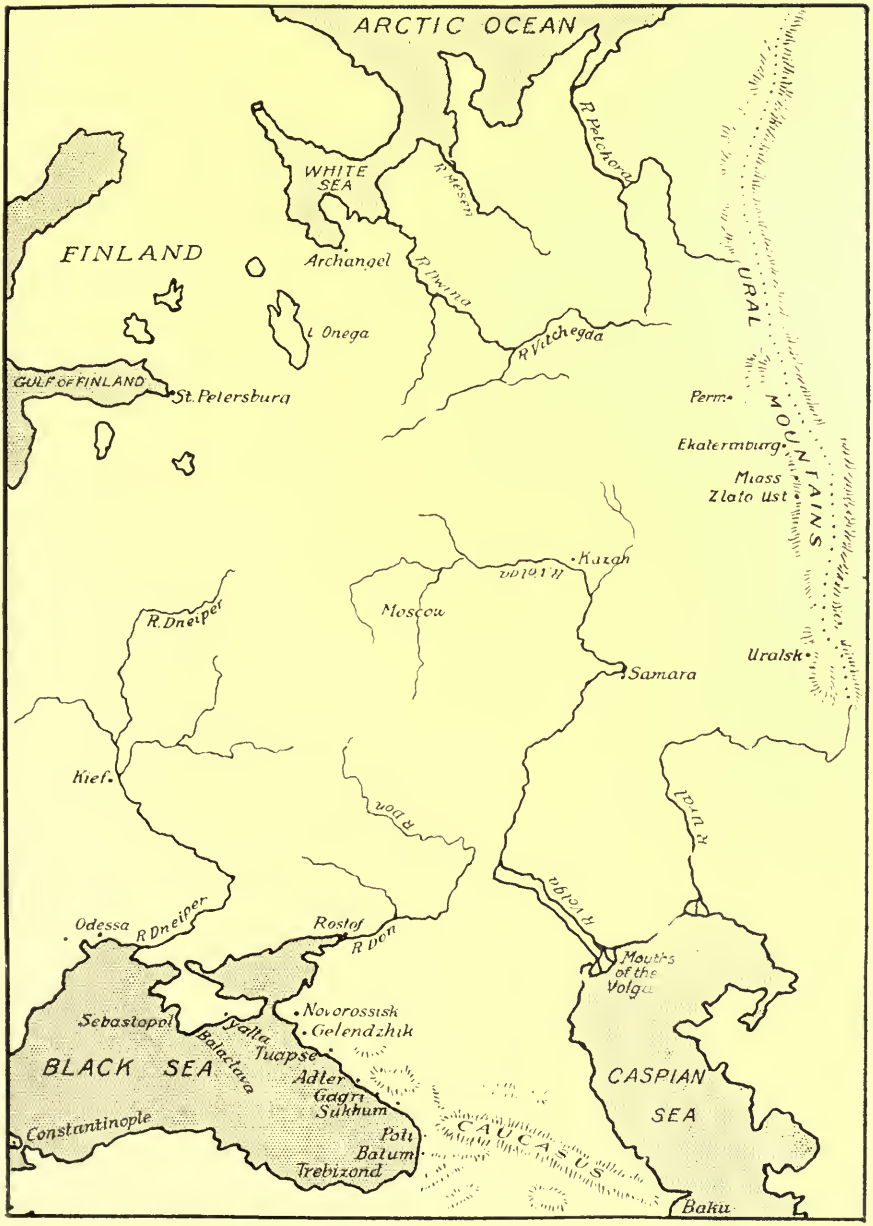
In the Caucasus, and especially in unfrequented parts, no unguarded person looking like a Russian is safe. Every tribesman you meet pretends to be the Ataman of his village, the person to whom the Government has delegated authority ; he asks to see your passport, wants to know all your business, and if he thinks there is any money to be made out of you, he has you seized and searched. There is no length to which the Caucasians do not go. Murder is appallingly frequent. Torture is applied to prisoners simply for the love of cruelty, and in general no scruple about human life will cause the tribesmen to hesitate a moment in making himself more secure by murdering his victim. The bodies of the murdered are easily hidden in the mountains, and it is a well-known fact that murderers and robbers are safe from justice. There is no horror of murder. The fact that a man has committed what we call a murder is almost a commonplace. Fighting is an everyday affair, and the Russian Government is lenient, because it cannot give the time and money necessary to pacify the district thoroughly. Many of the robbers are famous characters, of the Hadgi-Stavros type, as, for instance, Selim Khan at Vladikavkaz.

Robbery and murder are, I suppose, indigenous in the Caucasus. The vendetta is an established institution, and the necessity for revenge handed down to the third and fourth generation in a family is nothing uncommon. The Russians, who generally regard civil murder with leniency, have indulgence towards the family feuds, and content themselves with levying heavy fines for disorder. Indeed the Russian tenure of the Caucasus is an interesting comparison with ours of India. In India we punish murder

rigorously. Murder is frequent. The natives of India are a gentle race, but liable to sudden passions. A true gentleman, in a sudden access of rage, slays another in India, and he is hanged therefor: there is little chance of mercy. But in the Caucasus, if the murderer is brought to trial, he gets three years' penal servitude, or, if he is rich, escapes with a heavy fine; in nine cases out of ten, however, he is not brought to justice. India is held in the British grasp tightly; the Caucasus, in the Russian, loosely. There is much more national feeling in the Caucasus, much more freedom for the natives, than in India. It is surprising that the administration of the Caucasus is much more liberal than the administration of India.

It is sometimes pointed out that the Caucasus is much less developed than the Urals. Few prospectors dare risk their skin in the interior—and then, even if mineral wealth is discovered, the railway is so far distant that the exploitation is impracticable. Russia builds no railway for industrial ends. Her considerations are all military. Even now as I write, the project of a railway from Tuapse to Poti along the seashore runs the risk of being shelved because in time of war the enemy might use war-vessels to shatter it or capture it. The somewhat liberal tenure of the Caucasus appears to be an accident, a sort of side-issue.

Russia is more eager for conquest than any of the other Powers. Beyond all question, she enlarges her possessions at a greater rate. Long before the Caucasus is assimilated, Persia will be held by them in the same loose way that the former is held now. Russia also has designs on China and on Turkey, and would willingly take over immense tracts of territory. But


ARCTIC OCEAN
WHITE SEA
R. Mezen
R. Petchora
FINLAND
Archangel
R. Dwina
URAL MOUNTAINS
L. Onega
R. Vitchegda
GULF OF FINLAND
St. Petersburg
Perm
Ekaterinburg
Miass
Zlato Ust
Kazan
R. Volga
Moscow
R. Dneiper
Uralsk
Samara
Kief
R. Don
R. Ural
Odessa
R. Dneiper
Rostof
R. Don
Mouths of the Volga
Novorossisk
Gelendzhik
Sebastopol
Yalta
Balaclava
Tuapse
BLACK SEA
Adler
Gagri
Sukhum
CASPIAN SEA
Constantinople
Poti
Batum
Trebizond
CAUCASUS
Baku

RUSSIA

what for? Not to make money out of them, not to industrialise them, not to oppress them and tax them, but simply to possess them as an Imperial acquisition. The time must come when Russia will cease expanding, and begin to consider what she is going to make of the lands and peoples over which she holds sway.

Or perhaps Russia will again be beaten in the field, and again shorn of a tract of territory. Russia is on the whole weak in war—weak because her War Office is corrupt and her soldiers corruptible, from the highest officer to the new recruit. She is weak because she has no navy worth the name, and has to import all her guns and ammunition; weak also because the national traditions in the army are failing. In Manchuria the priests walked in front of the troops carrying the Cross or the Ikon: it was a terrible shock to have done so, and yet lost. And the war with Japan was foolish and shameful in a thousand ways, just as our war in the Transvaal, and it took the self-confidence and national pride out of the peasant soldiers just as it has done out of ours. Of course, now the history of the war is being gilded, and seeming victories are being furbished up, but it is what the fathers tell the children, and not what the history-book says that will count with the rising generation.

Russia still wins and still holds by diplomacy, by her courage to venture forward when all the rest of Europe is afraid, by the superior ability of her ministers and ambassadors, by her commercial disinterestedness, by her youth.

She is pushing forward as the young man is, and she goes in for conquest for the sheer love of the thing. The question still remains—What is she going to do in her middle-age when there are no more weak

nations to be spoliated? If she settles down to industrialism she will have the whip-hand in Europe by virtue of her rich and undeveloped lands. There is one great hope: it is that she will evolve something entirely her own, and not simply follow us down the old dull alleys of commerce, breathing our twice-breathed airs, exploring once more the illusion of trade.

XIX

ADVENTURES IN ABKHASIA

AS you walk in the Caucasus the tribesmen eye you as the hungry tiger does his meal at the Zoo. They have the advantage over all visitors, being generally mounted and armed to the teeth. The Russian Government is very strict as to the weapons it allows a Russian to have in his possession, and the police have upon occasion broken into houses to protest against deadly-looking carving knives, but the Caucasian may prance about as a knight in armour, and no one will interfere. Of course one revolver is almost as effective in itself as the whole rig-out of a tribesman, though one may see upon occasion a man with a gun slung over his back, a pistol at his belt, a dagger at the middle, and a scimitar balanced over his horse's shoulders. The Mahomedan robber thus armed thinks himself secure against a regiment, and his self-assurance in the presence of an ordinary Western pedestrian is amazing.

For my part, though I went unarmed, I wasn't going to be taken aback by imperious staring. With a ready word and a cheerful smile, I thought to get past all whom I should meet. I had tramped many a hundred miles in the worst districts before, and I anticipated little trouble. I had come, however, upon an awkward day. A meeting of tribesmen had been ordered at Pitsoonda, and from all parts I found the

princes and lords of the hills descending. There was no getting forward. Every other hillman stopped me to ask what I wanted, and to request me to go back to Pitsoonda. I said I intended making a bee-line for the highway, and each Caucasian, as he came, either misdirected me, or said there was no road, or swore I should be killed and robbed. I smiled and went on. But to take the culminating example. I had gathered a potful of blackberries, and was cooking them by the roadside when my passport was demanded for the fourth time—my *billet*, as the hillman prefers to call it.

"Can you read Russian?" I asked.

"Oh yes."

I gave him a recommendatory letter which he held upside down and gazed at with lack-lustre eye. I asked him if he found it satisfactory, but he replied by asking where I was going, and, on being told that I was making for the highway, ordered me to turn back.

"You must go back," was his verdict after staring five minutes at my letter held upside down.

"All right," I said. "If I can't find my way I'll turn back."

He seemed satisfied at that, and resumed his waddle forward down the glen on his miserable starved pony. But in a minute or so he returned with two companions.

"*Sleesh!*" said he; "hark 'ee," in about as impolite a tone as he could utter; "what nationality? Pole?"

It was inconvenient for me to say British or English, for unfortunately we have a reputation of great wealth, and all Caucasian robbers know that an Englishman carries about with him about ten times as

much money as he is likely to need. Indeed, but a month or so before this an Englishman had been robbed at Tuapse of 14,000 roubles = £1500. I informed my interlocutor with a smile that I was a *Shotlanetz*—a Scotsman.

"Ah!"

That evidently floored him.

"Which province of Russia?" he asked.

"Not Russia at all—a different empire."

"Turkish?"

"No."

"Chinese?"

"I can't say that."

"Where else? There is nowhere else."

I assured him that Scotland existed.

"Towards China or Turkey?" he inquired again.

"More towards Turkey," I conjectured.

"Are you Orthodox Russian?"

"No, we have a separate Church."

"Mahomedan, then?"

I assured him to the contrary, and then, to be on quite friendly terms, and yet muddle his mind a little further, I made him a present of a piece of Turkish money, a piastre. This pleased him immensely, for he understood the writing on it, Abkhasians being not far removed from the Turks by race, and he thought our money was the same as Turkish.

Whilst he thus interrogated me his companions looked on severely, and I calmly tended my fruit, put it out on a plate, and, taking some cold rice-pudding from my knapsack, made my meal. The Abkhasian was a short, thick-set man, with a jagged Turkish-looking countenance. He wore a white turban jauntily on his head, and a black cloak hung from his shoulders.

He carried a long poniard at his middle, and on his hip, just under his hand, a revolver. I didn't feel appalled by his aspect, for I had already been through the gamut of Caucasian experience years previously when I was attacked on Mamison Pass and absurdly arrested at Lisri. I resolved, however, to keep clear of hostile tribesmen as far as possible. I must say I was troubled in mind to account for the action of my man now. He entered into a serious conversation in Abkhasian with the other two men. Suddenly the questions began again.

"What is your occupation?"

"I am a wanderer," I replied.

"But how do you get your living?"

I told him that I wrote.

"You write—hah! Then, of course, you can cut hay; come and cut the hay on my fields."

I smiled, and refused.

"You will stay at my house to-night. To-morrow and the next day you will cut hay, and the day after I'll show you the track over the mountain myself."

I said nothing to this. The Abkhasian took the matter as agreed. He therefore put me through a new interrogatory, examining all my clothes and utensils and various possessions, and asking the value of each in turn. At last he asked me the value of the ring on my finger. I said I didn't know. He said he would buy it. I said he wouldn't. He said, "Hand it up, and let me look at it," and I told him it wouldn't come off. He said he knew a way of getting rings off fingers, and added something in Abkhasian to his friends.

"Oh," I said at last, "time doesn't seem very precious to you in these parts." And I shouldered

my pack. "Glad to have made your acquaintance. I think I'll be going now. Good-bye."

I jumped up with alacrity and took the road, but just as quickly the Caucasian cut me off with his horse.

"How about the hay?"

"Ah, yes, how about it?" said I with a smile. "Am I accompanying you?"

"I have to go to the *skhodka*—that is in the opposite direction," said he.

"Well?"

"You must go and wait for me."

"I shall be charmed. Where is your house?"

"On the crag."

"How shall I distinguish it?"

The Abkhasian did not reply to me but to his companions.

"Come on—no waste of words!" said one of the latter. "Move along."

I saw I was to have an escort, and that I was virtually a prisoner or a captive. So, with a ready obliging look, I agreed with my adversaries, and walked along between them, a rather amusing figure no doubt, and I wondered what under heaven I was going to do to escape. I tried cheerful conversation on the men, but they had nothing to say to me.

"This is really the Caucasus," said I at last naïvely. "They say the hospitality of the Caucasians is wonderful. No doubt your friend is going to entertain me royally."

The guards grinned at one another.

"I'm surprised there's no wine about," said I; "I suppose the people about here are too poor to afford much wine, but generally in the Caucasus I've heard

everybody drank well. I shouldn't mind a bottle myself."

This also produced no effect on my custodians at first, but in a short while one of them said, "There is a place yonder where we can buy wine."

"Oh," said I; "then let us all drink the health of our host at my expense. I'm as dry as possible."

I had found out the weak spot in my attendants. Their reserve soon melted away to affability when we were seated at the table in the wine-dealer's cottage. Our host, a money-loving old toper, was very glad to see us, and he filled us a couple of bottles of red wine from an old black skin which reposed in a corner of the only room of the establishment. I had a chicken boiled, and sent a child for some tomatoes, and I made my lunch, pouring out freely for my companions the while. As I paid on the spot for the chicken and the first two bottles, there was a general feeling of freedom—all Abkhasians being terribly in debt at the wine-shops.

When the first two bottles were emptied, my companions ordered another two without reference to me; then some acquaintances dropped in, and I fell into the background. More and more wine was brought out, and more people filled the little den of a room. I resolved to take my chance and slip out. I moved about now and then to fill or empty my glass, and so was able unremarked to place my pack at the entrance. I made friends with the host's little boy, and went out with him to look at something in the yard. I pulled my pack out after me and of course never came back. And avoiding Pitsoonda, and, indeed, all the haunts of men, I escaped to the seashore, where I slept in a deep hollow in the sandstone cliff.

Tramp, tramp once more through the sand, over boulders, over banks of rotting seaweed, round little capes where the waves washed the only passage! I had to undress several times in order to get round the rocks without a soaking, and even then got my heavy pack very wet. It was quite true there was no way southward along the seashore to Gudaöut except at great inconvenience.

There were no houses, no people, and I was not very sorry after my trouble with the Abkhasians. The cavern in which I slept was very deep, and on a level with the sand. I lay back and watched the sun sink into the waves, and then the moon came out shedding a silver radiance over the far ocean. I was very tired, and very damp from the sea-water, but the cave was warm all night. I made a sand bed, which is rather uneven to lie upon, but which, nevertheless, gives rest to the tired one. I lay and slept and dreamed. Many times I wakened, and saw the whole panorama of the ocean before me, dark rippling, silver glinting, in myriads of shadows and gleams. All night long the sea sang its song to the cliffs, and the cave was filled with strange sounds, as of a nurse singing to a baby.

Next day also was a heavy one. I had no provisions, for Pitsoonda had been shopless. I lived on crab apples—or rather, tried to stave off hunger by their aid, reflecting that those cast on desert islands were generally lucky to find crab apples, so I ought to feel cheerful. If I found not happiness, I at least found the symbol of it—a bright blue bird that flew weakly in front of me along the rocks. I caught it easily. Poor bird! it had been stricken by a hawk from the cliffs above—or was it a spent bird of

passage? It reminded me of that expression of Nietzsche's: "Thoughts that we can express, like birds which allow themselves to be caught, to be caught by the hand." Was not Maeterlinck's "Blue Bird" perhaps such an one?

I carried my new acquaintance along on my hand, but he very soon gave me to understand that he had interests of his own, and that he did not belong to any chance person who should pick him up, but to himself. He asserted his rights in a very lively style, pecking at my fingers vigorously. As I looked at him, his eyes gleamed with rage rather than with suffering. I thought to myself wickedly that his wings or tail-feathers would make a pleasant souvenir of this troublous journey from Pitsoonda, but upon reflection I gave him his liberty again. I felt I was about to treat him very much in the same style I had feared a hillman might treat me, and, reflecting on this, I let him go. He very gladly fluttered from my hands to the sand; I fear, however, he must have soon fallen a victim to the hawks, the owls, or the waves.

On the sea round the rocks swam long-necked gulls; far off on the sands every now and then appeared a vulture, looking in the distance like a man; on a stretch of sand where a gorge led down to the sea, a herd of deer flocked away at my approach. I saw more of animals than of man.

The day was growing to be very hot. I had tea when I came to the first fresh stream—tea without bread or milk, not a very palatable breakfast. I was even loth to spend the time to boil the kettle, as every minute of the coolness of the morning was precious.

As I neared the Black River, the shore widened somewhat, but there was still comparatively little

passage, and walking was over the wave-washed water edge, or over "the dimpling of unfooted sands." High above me the sheer rock lifted itself to the sea. In the heat of noon I disturbed a brown snake curled up in front of me. It wound off in terror—to the sea, and disappeared. Surely the serpent was without his wisdom on this occasion! I raised my stick to bruise his head, fulfilling the Scriptures, but the reptile did not return!

The Black River had to be forded, and after it the White River. This was accomplished by wading, for the water only came up to the knees. At the White River I deserted the seashore. The tramp through the shingle and sand was very arduous, and I judged it possible to reach the road by following up the boulder-strewn channel of the river. It was a pleasant change to make my journey stepping from stone to stone—adventurous also, boyishly interesting. But since the river divided into many streams, I had to cross the rushing water five or six times. Patience was rewarded. I came at last to a deviating lane which took me quietly, through vineyards of thick-clustered purple grapes, to the widespread town of Gudaöut.

XX

GUDAÖUT

THE mountains look on Gudaöut and Gudaöut looks on the sea, or, to put it less politely, the mountains, unaware of the fact that Gudaöut lies between, look direct to the sea. It is scarcely to be thought that the grand line of snow-capped peaks deigns to rest its gaze on the squalid little Caucasian port.

Gudaöut is an eruption of low dwellings out of the swamps. The houses are so low and ramshackle that it appears as if the inhabitants had really wished to live in burrows, underground, but for conventionality's sake put up those crusts called walls and roof. It might justify the sentence, "Earth has many diseases; one of them is man."

It is Caucasian. I arrived in the late afternoon, and had dinner at a Turkish restaurant, such a den as few tourists would venture to enter—just a basement with two trestle tables and four forms. The dinner was cooked in the same room as it was served, and indeed all the pots cooking on the fires were exhibited in the window. Round the window and the counter, like armoured plate, ranged a dozen large white metal flesh-pots swimming and bubbling. Behind this breastwork, like a fat dark spider waiting for a fly, stood mine host—cook, waiter, cashier, bottle-washer all in one.

It was past dinner-time, and idlers were playing dice where the diners ought to have been. I inquired the price of a dinner, and learned that a course, one whole portion, cost ten copecks (2½d.), a half-portion five copecks. These prices somewhat astonished me, I could not have cooked myself much of a meal at such a price. The host looked at me with a compelling frown, and, like a devilish sorcerer, raised in turn the lids of the vessels simmering in the window. I was mesmerised into a seat, and found myself confronted with a half-portion of cabbage soup.

Well, it was first-class; anyone but an epicure and finnicker would have pronounced it so. I raised my plate when it was empty, and took it to the counter, where again my host of the Arabian Nights looked at me from under his smoky eyebrows, and raised the lids of the pots once more. My second course was stuffed tomatoes. They also were good, so I had a glass of wine with them. Then I had "little doves," mincemeat cooked in cabbage leaves. In this case the cabbage leaves were stringy, and, to the astonishment of my host, I left them on my plate. No one ever left anything on his plate at that establishment. As I thought I could manage a fourth half-portion, and since there was no "sweet," I had "sauce," little bits of chicken with roast onion, and much gravy. Why such a dish is called sauce passes my comprehension, but it is called so all over the Caucasus, and it is often the *pièce de résistance* of a Caucasian dinner.

I paid my host the twenty-five copecks that were due to him.

"You cook your dishes very well," said I to him as I picked up my change.

He shrugged his shoulders, and grimaced with his eyebrows, unflattered.

"How else?" he said.

All the same he probably was pleased.

I soon dismissed him from my mind. The inner man had been satisfied, the outer now craved attention. I was bearded like the pard, and had a superfluity of hair on my head. I repaired to the nearest barber. When I saw myself in a mirror I almost started in surprise, as in seeing a stranger. I had burned through all the colours of sunburn, and looked like a native of Arabia. As for my hair, I feared the barber might refuse me. But no, he was as eager as a hungry crow. He expressed no astonishment, and was in short a barber of perfect tact, not admitting by the shadow of a line in his expression that he was confronted with anything out of the ordinary in his daily round. He was, however, silent. He did not regale me with the "conversation" that barbers deal out with their lather in civilised parts. He was very slow at his work, and I stared all the time at two immense pictures, one of our first parents in Paradise, the other of tiger-hunting in India, two gems of art, evidently bought at a fair according to the shopman's taste. The first was an amusing picture: a garden with a rose-coloured sky. Adam and Eve, a Russian boy and girl looking up very contritely at a God the Father, whose form, all surrounded by misty light, looked like the ghost in *Hamlet;* vegetarian tigers eating grass; the lion begging the lamb's pardon and letting it drink first from the pool—then in the background, amidst dark green evil foliage, the devil, skulking, grinning. The other picture had no stated connection with the Adam and Eve one, but it was

amusing to see the same two tigers who had been eating grass reproduced as game for Hindus on elephants firing with blunderbusses.

At last the smiling barber pulled the towel from my neck and bowed; his work was accomplished. I walked out a new man. One thing remained; I visited the boot-black, for though Gudaöut is pavementless and deep in soft dust, it is yet a watering place, and every visitor has his boots polished out of doors.

What a place is Gudaöut! It has not a shop worth the name, even though it is called a town. All buying is done at a row of stalls and broken-down sheds, and by far the most prominent article of traffic is old iron. Fruit of course abounds, especially the dark purple Isabella grape, which seems almost too cheap to be good to eat. All the more imposing buildings are cafés, and have tables set up in the open air. Here Caucasians air their fine national dresses, sip coffee and cold water, read the papers, or play dice and dominoes. All the Caucasians seem to have a passion for playing fives and sevens.

I resolved to go to the post-office for my letters, and then to the coffee-house to read them. I chose a Greek establishment with a white-painted verandah, and, having found my correspondence waiting for me at the post-house, I promised myself a pleasant hour or so of relaxation before sundown. I entered the café, and ordered *matsoni*.

I had not, however, been seated ten minutes when up comes the chief of police, or one of his officers, booted, spurred, and in a khaki-coloured cloak, and demands my papers.

"Not going to be arrested in connection with the

murder of Stolypin, I hope," said I, not paying much attention.

The official looked at me acidly.

I handed him a blank English passport of the sort Azeff showed when he was arrested in Moscow five minutes after the murder of General Dubasof, a passport whose last visé was at Alexandrovo on the frontier. As I had been sleeping out almost all the while, there had not been occasion for office verification. When I had been staying at Nakhitchevan the house-porter had forgotten to ask for it. The chief of police did not seem satisfied, so I offered him my letter of recommendation from the Governor of Archangel. This document certified that I was tramping Russia in the interests of science, and exhorted all official persons to give me any help that might be in their power. I felt rather doubtful in offering it at a point some three thousand miles south, but the doubt soon vanished, for the attitude of the police officer altered at once. How amusing, that the Governor of Archangel can influence the police of Transcaucasia!

Not only were suspicions checked, but the khaki-cloaked official was ready to sit down at my table, and chuckled affably, "So that's what you do! All the way on foot! You are a *chudak*—a marvellous fellow. And has nothing unpleasant occurred to you?" said he.

I owned to no misfortunes.

The afternoon passed gently to evening, and I still postponed my exit from the town. It was actually dusk when I bought a supply of provisions and walked out. The cows were coming in from the mountains, some hundreds of them driven by two boys, and each cow, or pair of cows, turned off as it came up the main

street and sought of its own accord its own gate and its own mistress. What bellowings there were outside all the houses where the gates had not been opened in anticipation. The cow is like a husband coming home for his dinner after the day's work—he doesn't like to be kept waiting. Every village in the Caucasus has this cow parade at dusk, and I generally tried to avoid being on the road at the time; there is so much trouble going against the tide. To-day, however, it was necessary to go out quickly if I was to find a place for the night, so I passed through them all, and out over the broad bridge of the town by the high-road that goes to Sukhum, and passed the last carts coming home from the fields. About two miles farther on, I spread my rug in a hollow on the level strand, in the shelter of some juniper bushes, and committed my somewhat tired limbs to the arms of mother earth.

XXI

NOVY AFON

NEXT day I spent on the mountains, picked wild fruit, read the Russian papers, lay in the sun and slept; but in the evening I started for New Athos, some twelve miles south. All day I had seen the stage-coaches plying to and fro on the highway beneath me, and it seemed by the merrymaking crowd that the famous monastery was a place of holiday. I had consequently little inclination to hurry there; after about six miles' walking I began to search out a resting-place for the night. This I found halfway up a steep hill at the foot of a rising maize field. I found a cradle at the point where desert and sown met, at the ridge where the plough had begun its work tearing up the black earth. Here in the hollow I made my bed. The maize climbed gigantically up into the sky, and the wind whispered in it all night long. By camping so high I judged I should escape dampness. The rotting shrubs make all the lower region pestilential. In this I was not mistaken; the air was fresher and drier, and down below me in the early morning lay a mist charged with the foulness of the dry-rot of the swamps.

Next day, and indeed two or three others, I spent at New Athos Monastery in a cell the monks gave me. I climbed the ruins of Iver, visited all the

works of the monastery, the orchards, schools, workshops, factories. I prayed with the pilgrims at several of the chapels, and enjoyed a most delightful interlude in my tramping.

And it was interesting as well as delightful. Here, as at Pitsoonda, the monastery is mother of the country round, succouring the Caucasian peoples as its own children. In this case, however, the monastery is incomparably more rich and powerful. New Athos[1] is a great institution, something withal of the new. By virtue of this monastery, and one or two similar establishments, the Russian Church shows a power of working out the New Russia, and saving the national spirit in the battle with its predatory commercial masters. It is itself a city. It is the great world, though also the quiet religious home, for it is visited by thousands of people every year, and is never with fewer than fifty or so guests. Of course it is the work of one man—a man with a heart and soul to give, and not merely a hireling carrying on old traditions for a salary. It is a question whether much will not break down when the ancient Archimandrite dies.

In Russia the Church has for foundation as everywhere, the mystical need of man; and for superstructure, the mystical history of mankind mystically interpreted. Prince and peasant take their place with equal convenience there, for they are in the Church by virtue of their manhood rather than by virtue of rank. The pity is that the professors in the Church are often found to be devoid of the instinct for the safe foundation. A great number are always to be

[1] Described fully in *A Tramp's Sketches*, by the same author (Macmillan, 1912).

found taking their stand on the miraculous, and building the whole edifice of the Church on materially misunderstood natural facts, making the aristocracy in the Church into religious cranks, and the peasantry into superstitious clods. Let it be granted miracles are possible; but God is not vulgar. Many Russian abbots would make of Him a veritable showman. Hence the discredit that comes down upon the Church. I think miracle-worship is brought about by a contempt for the peasantry and a terrible inability on the part of the priests to win God's personal favour. Obviously when a priest has the grace of God he needs no miracles to show forth the Word.

The Archimandrite of Novy Afon is one of those, and needs no miracle. A wise pagan once said, "Show me the face of Christ, and it will convince me. I ask no more." The face of Christ is more convincing than all miracles wrought in His name, and here, as I think, at Novy Afon the ancient Abbot has it. When one regards the great monastery, even in its secular sphere of factory, field, and workshop, its aspect is fair; it is not commercial in the sense of evil that word now obtains: looking at its features, one sees the coin of God, that not mentioned in the Gospel story of the coin of Cæsar, but left to be understood, and when one asks, looking at it, "Whose image and superscription is this?" the answer is that it is not the image of Cæsar but the face of Christ.

But the Church which is founded on the wonder-working ikon is a commercial Church; it knows that the greater the miracle, the more the money cast into the treasury. The wonder-working ikon or relic is well in its place; if the ikon and the relic have

such powers, they have their special place and significance in the Church. The heavens did not open at Bethabara that the people might open their mouths, or it would go on opening there now when the pilgrims visit it to be baptized. But the singular event of the Gospel story has its definite place. It is an accompaniment of the life of Jesus; it is not that life itself.

At St. Seraphim, below Nizhni, is an entirely different monastery from that of Novy Afon. It is founded on the wonder-working power of the relics of Holy Father Seraphim, a Russian saint whose story is part of the spiritual treasure of the Orthodox Church. Here all the roads are veritably blocked by the cripples and the blind, the invalids and the dying, who are brought from the remotest corners of Russia to be healed. The peasants have the hearts of children, and their beliefs have perhaps no harm in themselves; but they have every harm to the official Church when they awaken contempt in the educated class, even in the officiating clergy themselves. The Russian Church cannot afford to take its stand on miracles, especially as the age of Faith is passing there. If ever there comes a revolution in the land, the Church will suffer immense tribulation through the imputation of superstition, idolatry, simony, and corruption. The good part of the Church will be overwhelmed with that which is diseased, just as in England, at the time of the Reformation, the true monasteries perished with the false. How much the destruction of the monasteries has meant to England, few people know; for our history is buried in prejudice. It was certainly equal to a destruction of the Universities. In Russia even

more stands to be lost, for the Church has greater enemies to fight against.

The Russian Church has the future of the peasantry in its hands more than the Government or the Duma or the Tsar. It can save it from ruthless exploitation by the commercial Western world only by keeping it honest, God-fearing, founded in reality. It can save it from the intelligentia by saving it from superstition and consequent contempt. In the long-run it could save it from militarism and the power of the Tsar, for the Church is stronger than the Government. Happily, as yet there is no need to quarrel with the Tsardom; the need is to combine, to care for the peasant spiritually and materially, by giving him the Church built on the rock, and saving to his hands his own Slavonic land.

. . . . . .

I have described the life of the monastery somewhat freely elsewhere; there remains but to state in this narrative that I stayed four days there, took a rest for which I was glad, but also felt the influence of the malarial water and air, for which I was the opposite of glad. I sought out the pilgrim boy who had spent part of a night with me at Lazarevskoe, but failed to find him, being ignorant of his name, and the number of the monastery establishments being great. I learned at the monastery that no pilgrims went any longer to the Holy Land on foot through Turkey, but that they embarked at Sukhum, Batum, Poti, Odessa, Sevastopol, but chiefly at Odessa. Formerly they had walked through Asia Minor *via* Karse, but that route was very dangerous, and no longer even allowed to Russian peasants. The monastery has a

fine religious library, and a bookshop with all manner of religious books and sacred pictures for sale.

The chief things against the monastery, from my point of view, were lack of fresh air and good water. On my fourth day I was suddenly prostrated by a sort of fever and sickness. The idea of food filled me with loathing. All day I lay on my bed, unable to find the energy to go out and see the monastery sights, to walk, or to write, or to read. It may have been the colza oil in the monastery soup; all visitors are entertained on "fast" diet; soup is made—not from beef but—from wood oil. Some people thrive on this, others do not. For my part, the frugal diet of the road is better. It is both a fast and a feast. Novy Afon fasting was fasting only.

But how kind every one at the monastery was! The monks knew at once that I felt ill, and two or three came to my bedside and talked to me. I stoutly protested I was well, and that occasionally I had bilious attacks, &c. &c., or I am sure I should have been doctored and pampered.

Next day I said good-bye, and put my feet to the road once more. I knew that to remain in the cell meant to get worse and worse, and perhaps to land at last in one of the various fevers of the district. Tramping in the fresh air on the mountain side was, in my opinion, the best medicine.

XXII

SUKHUM

THE carriage-way to Sukhum is well kept up to the boundary of the monastery estate, but beyond that, in the *rayon* of the city, it is about as bad as road can be—broken, dust-deep, bridgeless. There are several places where bridges, having broken down in the middle, were simply obstacles, causing all vehicles to make a detour.

The road runs with the coast line, and, by virtue of its scenery, is one of the finest along the Black Sea shore. After feeling rather low from the malarial atmosphere of the monastery cell, I was truly exhilarated by the fresh and sparkling vision of the sea, and all the way, as I walked, the waves tossed up merrily, like thousands of little fountains. The marvellous sun, which had shone daily for six weeks, still poured down its rays, and I packed away my jacket in my knapsack and walked in my Russian shirt like a workman.

Nearing Sukhum, however, the pleasantness of the day was marred by the broken roads and the clouds of dust that told of a town traffic; I waded ankle deep in yellow dust, and turned my back to blinding clouds sent up by the evening breeze.

Grey and ugly looked the little town as I approached it—only the white villas dotted over the hills behind gave a notion that it might be pleasant

to live there. Dirty streams poured down to a dirty tideless sea. Filthy-looking Greeks and Turks thrashed obstinate oxen into the town.

Sukhum is considered one of the most important towns on the Black Sea coast, and as a fashionable resort it ranks with Yalta and Gagri. It is a famous place, and, by what is said of it in St. Petersburg or Moscow, one would think it to be the most delightful place for a townsman's holiday. In the face of that, it must come as a surprise to the visitor that the town has no pavement, that there is no electric light, no water-taps in the houses, water having to be drawn from the well or brought in buckets from the river; that the streets are not washed, and that decaying rubbish decays away until it is unnoticeable, that there is not even canalisation and a draining off of rain-water and superfluous ponds and slops. In dry weather it is six inches deep in dust, and in wet it is a sort of marsh of Ely. Apparently it is by conspiracy that this place sustains its reputation as a health resort.

But what is Sukhum beyond dust and mud? Its first appearance is a trifle deceptive. There is a way of living in Sukhum and being all the while independent of its drawbacks. The first impression is that of a square of open stalls crowded with hawkers and buyers dealing mostly in vegetables and fruit, and round about this *bazar* a number of streets of coffee-houses, gaming rooms, billiard rooms, and shops of Caucasian wares; there are shops of saddlery and swords, shops of embroidered belts and worked silver, special tailors' shops for the outfit of Caucasian dandies. At the sea-front there is a short pier with kiosks at the landward end. The water on each side of the pier

is turbid and evil-looking, bestrewn with the refuse of fruit. The shore is shingle, and facing it is the best street, a long array of restaurants and cafés, white-walled and many-windowed. Bathing accommodation is wretched even to the point of impropriety—the only establishment in the town where you can get a bath, hot or cold, is in Russian *ubogie*, God-forsaken! As for the shore, there are no such things as bathing tents, and the bathers, both men and women, are exposed to public gaze as they undress. Not that Russians feel much trouble on the latter score; for them even the bathing costume is as yet a novelty. Of course I had my dip on the morning after I arrived at Sukhum, and, knowing what I do, I cannot imagine that many of the visitors bathe. The water is dirty, the sea-bed shingly, and since one or two rivers descending at express rate from the snowy heights empty themselves in the bay, the differences in the temperature of the water are upon occasion alarming. The cold water keeps together in the sea, all in a layer, and the bather striking out into deeper parts goes alternately through warm and icy.

But Sukhum has a secret. I discovered it on the second day. All that is delectable, all that makes Sukhum worth while, lies behind the town, up in the white houses that dot the mountain side. Convalescent Russians going to Sukhum in order to get strong do not take rooms down in the little inferno on the seashore. They take a villa or half-villa on the heights above, and live a serene existence in the sight of the sea. They are beyond the cognisance of the port's ugliness. To them Sukhum is glorious. They sit in shady vineyards reading novels; they drink coffee and play cards on verandahs where even in

the hottest weather there is always a fresh mountain breeze; they make acquaintance with the occupants of other villas—and these new-found Russian acquaintances are always entrancingly interesting; they pay visits and exhibit to one another their pet affectations or transient infatuations; they arrange picnics and make excursions to local waterfalls, to the sulphur springs, to the city of caves. Life is beautiful here for the convalescent: one may say that he begins life anew—Eden anew if he be rich—and he sees once more the morning of life, fresh, dew-sparkling, unclouded.

XXIII

ONE OF THE HIGHER INTELLIGENTIA

AT Sukhum I met by chance Vassily Vassil'itch G—— on a visit from Vladikavkaz. I had known him well some seasons earlier, in the little Caucasian town where I was then living ; he is a charming fellow, and I was glad to meet him. I have never in all my life met any man so gracious and generous as Vassily Vassil'itch. In a country where the truly cultured are kinder than in any other kingdom in the world, this friend has seemed to me to be the acme. But he was not only loving and gracious beyond words, but a most interesting person by virtue of his thought and culture.

He is generally extremely well dressed. His friends call him "The Marquis," for his manners are so courtly. Indeed one is always unexpectedly coming upon him standing at one side, his hat in hand and his head and body bowed to you in the most entire respect. So it was at Sukhum ; and, though I felt slightly at a disadvantage for a moment, being aware of my own wild appearance, yet it was only for a moment, for the clothes of others Vassily Vassil'itch entirely ignores. From the way my friend received me, I might have been a Caliph in disguise.

We shook hands ; we were both *delighted.* I agreed to come up to his rooms in one of the white *datchas* on the green mountain side. On the way

up I told my friend briefly of my doings, of my intentions, of my writings. What was really touching for me was that he had sent to England and obtained my *Vagabond in the Caucasus* for himself, paying the absurd English price for it, twelve shillings and sixpence = six roubles. In Russia it is possible to buy six good new books for that money. *Undiscovered Russia* was just out, and he proposed to buy that also, but I advised him to wait till it was issued in a pocket edition.

Vassily Vassil'itch is a great buyer of books. He has bought all Kipling's works direct from England. He had read them all too, as he assured me, except *Traffics and Discoveries*, which he found a "wee bit disconnectit," as the Scotsman said.

"Have you got your *Traffics and Discoveries* here?" I asked, when we got to the house.

"Oh, ye-e-s," said he, in broken English, "you must look."

I looked, and to my astonishment the book was a fault. It opened correctly, but after fifty or so pages it suddenly changed into a stores catalogue, or a report of a missionary society, or something of the sort. Vassily Vassil'itch, who has read and understood *The Secret Doctrine*, thought Kipling was perhaps writing something particularly occult. He couldn't imagine that a bookseller would send him all the way from England a copy that ought not to have been in his shop.

Vassily Vassil'itch lived in a sun-bathed *datcha*, and he had rooms on the upper storey. On his window-sill a row of pears weighing a pound each were ripening. Just inside his door hung a heavy bunch of Alicant grapes.

He apologised for the disorder—his couches and tables were strewn with books, yellow-covered French books, garishly-printed white-covered Russian ones, pale-coloured crabbed-printed German ones. My friend was somewhat of a polyglot, but better than that he thought in many languages. After all, every waiter and hotel tout is something of a polyglot, but it is not everyone who is living with the culture of four capitals at once.

Though merely on a holiday, Vassily Vassil'itch had fifty or sixty volumes scattered about. He pointed to them with all his fingers outstretched, and asked me to look through them and take as many as I found interesting away with me on my tramping. I should often be glad to read them.

"Ah!" said I. "It is necessary for you to tell me what is interesting. What do you read of Russian literature now? Do you still read the *Russkoe Vedimosti?*"

He had given up the *Vedimosti*, and indeed all the higher Liberal papers and magazines, since I last met him. This seemed to me surprising at first, but I soon realised how much the Liberal movement in Russia had failed in the last few years. Vassily Vassil'itch had given up hoping for anything through Liberalism. He had come to detest the *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, a Russian monthly that resembles our English weekly *The Nation*, for Korolenko, who directs the *Russkoe Bogatstvo*, is a Liberal of the Manchester school—he is the Russian Massingham. He believes in the rights of small nations to live as they wish without interference; he directs a whole army of thinkers and students who are enemies of the Tsardom. He is kept in touch with English affairs

by the famous correspondent of the *Vedimosti*, Dionéo, and is well able to pull the ropes whereby at the telling moment, the ever-ready agitators in the British press and Parliament may call Russia's actions to question.

But Vassily Vassil'itch is no longer interested in this powerful and even enthralling review. He will not even read periodicals where the contributors to the *Bogatstvo* appear. And he is one of many. Where, then, it may be asked, is he looking for a guidance of his culture and a divination of his thoughts?

Vassily Vassil'itch indicated his favourite authors in Viacheslaf Ivanof, Remizof, Brussof, Blok, the contributors of the magnificent volume *The Golden Fleece*, now extinct. He looks in a way to the Church for expression of his life. I believe now he goes to church, and finds new promises there in the national mood; possibly he goes to the communion service and finds there a mystical satisfaction. Certainly he turns more to beauty, to the personal and emotional, rather than to the political and intellectual. He likes the delicate poetry of Blok and the lyrical pageantry of Balmont. He would like to find once more a strong personal religion.

And there is a religion for the *intelligentia* on the other side of doubt and scepticism and eclecticism. How the cultured crave that religion nowadays—the Christianity that you come to after you have passed through agnosticism and don't-care-ism and materialism and the card-castle architecture of politics! The higher *intelligentia*, those now dissociating themselves from the new self-styled *intelligentia*, the bourgeois and commercial herd, would gladly become a Church, or

a vanguard of the Church. It will become so when it finds itself as a class, looks after its good name, and defends itself and its interests. If it fails to realise itself, and becomes finally merged in the commercially-bent literary, artistic, and political class—then the conditions of English culture will be repeated, the true values of the nation will be beaten down in the mire by the feet of the swine. The danger seems to me to be stated in a story I heard of Biely, the Russian mystic and poet. Pereplotchikof asked him why he wrote so much—why he did not wait and mature his work, and he answered, "I must earn two hundred roubles a month." When a mystic is forced to go on being mystical in order to earn his two hundred and fifty pounds a year it is time to call a halt. Biely had better write a humorous page of *Satirikon* to get his money, or drive a cab, or carry parcels, and be mystical in his spare time for no reward, should it be that mysticism sells poorly. There is literature, and there is writing for two hundred and fifty pounds a year; they are two different things. No literary man could have any doubt of that; it is the reader who is perplexed when the golden-mouthed poet begins to put forth gilded dross, when the dreamer begins to invent, the wonderful thinker simply to remember, the diviner of mystery to mystify, the wizard-novelist to run on without keeping up the spell and the enchantment.

Russia has at present few books and good ones—I omit out of consideration the swarm of hack translations—reviews in the papers are reliable, advertisements of books are never seen. Alas, if trading on a name is going to set in, and writing enough mysticism to keep a wife and family! Then surely will appear in Russia the commercial publisher, who knows

nothing of what he publishes beyond its deceptive value or the spiciness or eccentricity of it.

But I have turned aside from my friend. He seeks the individual utterance in literature; the word spoken not to cover the masses, but to your very self as if there existed no one else for the author. He looks for the real, the intimate, the alluring—that which, whilst charming, really charms and allures, drawing the reader towards a new conception.

We talked on many matters. Vassily Vassil'itch had been what Nietzsche calls "a collector and saver of ideas, a night-owl of the spirit," he had built high the Babel of eclecticism, and had known comparative thought and systematised religion to the perfection point. He had put all the religions together, and found them one in the Theosophic temple. He had accepted all the lost prophets and put them with Christ as pillars of that temple, and had even paused, when the work was done, to admire. But now a change was showing itself in his mind. He began to feel that in knowing the thoughts of everybody else he had no thoughts of his own; that in having all the prophets he had not one of them. He began to feel the need of the personal and individual in intellectual and religious expression. Such an ordinarily accepted idea as that expressed in—

> "Flower in the crannied wall,
> I pluck you out of the crannies,
> I hold you here, root and all, in my hand,
> Little flower—but *if* I could understand
> What you are, root and all, and all in all,
> I should know what God and man is,"

Vassily Vassil'itch would now deny. Though in the days of his building and collecting he received it

without question, he now denies it, and in that denial lies the change from death to life, not only in Vassily Vassil'itch perhaps, but in the cultural life of a nation. Vassily Vassil'itch says now: "If I know what you are, root and all, and all in all, I know nothing at all of God or man; I am absolutely desolate of personal knowledge. I am become the dead *logos*, and not the human heart reading that *logos*"—No, that is all wrong, that is foolishness, that talk of all in all and root and all. All that Vassily Vassil'itch asks is that he look at the flower, see it in its beauty for a moment, and realise something in his soul thereby. There is a great difference there. In that new demand of my friend, I see as it were the breaking forth of new verdure from dead land. I see what is perhaps the essential spirit in Russian literature, that which was essential in the work of Dostoievsky and Chekhof.

Vassily Vassil'itch had been a follower of Rudolf Steiner to the last gasp of the old life. I don't know that he has even yet entirely turned his back on that great German eclectic, but he must and will. He talked to me of the new-formed order of the "Star in the East," which the Theosophists have inaugurated in anticipation of the coming of a new world-teacher. He regarded this with a hope and a questioning that were pathetic together. The idea of a New-one issuing forth out of all the dead history of religion and thought was much to his heart, and all his soul was hushed to hear the words of such a New-one; but his heart misgave him when he read that the New-one had been discovered in Krishna-murti, a child not yet articulate. He gave me the little blue volume, *At the Feet of the Master*, with real sadness. "It's all sweet and simple and regular—but without a breath of inspiration," said

he. "Our precocious Russian boys at fourteen would compose more promising work, many of them."

Then, being much attracted by English character, he had sought for the living word in our literature and found it not. "I think you have no religion in England now," he said to me. "I say it with all respect for your people, and I except yourself of course; no religion, only politics. You seemed to have religion up to the time of the South African war, but now only politics. Browning as a young man was your last poet. No, Tennyson was a journalist; he wrote journalism in verse, leading articles in verse, and he was unoriginal. He thought himself great, and that was the end of all things. I don't think he even began to be a little loved-of-God. I like the poets loved-of-God; they do not utter words in vain. Browning was loved-of-God in his youth, but later on he was merely great." Vassily Vassil'itch waved his hand.

"And now I notice you think you have new ideas in England—you have dramatists and so-called realists. All think themselves great, but are not loved-of-God."

My friend told me how he had been told that Bernard Shaw was impossibly indecent—indecent for indecency's sake, "what you call 'frank,'" said Vassily Vassil'itch with charming *naïveté*. He had expected to find his works to be what Russians call *pornographia* —that is, sheer solid material indecency—and had been surprised to find nothing of the kind. If there were any indecency, it was entirely in the realm of ideas. To his astonishment, he found nothing new in Shaw except what is rare in any author—an entire absence of poetic feeling.

"I want poetry," said Vassily Vassil'itch, turning over the pages of a volume of Verhaeren with a sigh.

"And you can't get it?" said I. "You find the supply in the world inadequate? Then you must write your own poems. That is how it is with me. I simply read all the books I cared for. I started when I was very young, and soon found my true taste. At last I worked through all that was wonderful and fine in my store of books, and I looked around and sighed. Now when I write anything I like, I feel I am writing for myself the next book to read, the one I couldn't find in the libraries."

Vassily laughed. He does not think he can write. But I feel that he will—when he has discovered the beautiful as something for the moment entirely his own, I think he will.

Vassily Vassil'itch cleared his books to one side, and the samovar was brought in. I expressed my determination to go forward on my journey southward, and my friend, solicitous for my health, had been persuading me to wait supper and to stay the night. Even now evening was apparent in the sky, and I thought to go. But I stayed a little.

There was a severe sunset over the sea, golden and tranquil, and we looked out upon it. The sun was just finally disappearing below the waves, the last golden footway of his rays just trembled between light and shadow. And in a moment that was gone.

> "C'était par ces soirs d'or de Flandre et de Zélande
> Ou' les parents
> Disent aux enfants
> Que les Jésus vont sur la mer,"

said Vassily Vassil'itch, repeating from the volume of Verhaeren that he had in his hand.

"What is the book?" I asked.

It was *Les Forces tumultueuses.*

"No, not very interesting, but daring, and written with feeling. Some images please me; for instance—

> "Et les désirs dont tu t'alleges
> Quand nous parlons de nous-mêmes le soir
> Sont clairs, fougueux, soudains, mais sont étranges
> Comme un panier d'oranges
> Vidé soudain, sur de la neige."

"Why should I like it? I don't know. I have a feeling that it is wrong to like it. It is very decadent to need such freshness as a basket of oranges emptied on to the snow. What hot, tired souls we must have, some of us; when I read that verse and liked the strange image; it was as if I myself were made up within of oranges and snow, lovely rich orange colour and perfect whiteness, heat of Spain and ice of Russia. Yes, it is decadent to need and like such unusual contrast and freshness. It is something like the old roué's feeling when he is worn out with debauchery, and thinks he can be rescued by marrying a fair young girl. . . ."

I thought Vassily Vassil'itch went too far in probing his feeling. Perhaps his self-analysis was faulty. He may have been simply beginning to experience the personal and individual happening in the soul when reading in a certain mood. I took the book from him, and began looking it through. There seemed to be many fine lines and startling images, but all peculiarly, and, if I may say so, parochially French.

Such a line as—

> "Vets-toi de sang, Venus, voici quatre-vingt-treize"

is something in no other language than French.

"This is a fine poem," said my friend, turning to a long tirade on the financier and his gold. He began to recite in his melodious voice—

"Oh l'or, son or qu'il sème au loin, qu'il multiplie,
Là-bas, dans les villes de la folie,
Là-bas dans les hameaux calmes et doux,
Dans l'air et la lumière et la splendeur, partout!
Son or ailé qui s'enivre d'espace
Son or planant, son or rapace,
Son or vivant,
Son or dont s'éclairent et rayonnent les vents,
Son or qui boit la terre
Par les pores de sa misère,
Son or ardent, son or furtif, son or retors,
Morceau d'espoir et de soleil—son or!"

"Yes, I like that," said I; "'là-bas dans les villes de la folie, là-bas dans les hameaux calmes et doux,' and 'son or qui boit la terre par les pores de sa misère.' You also feel a malice against commercialism? You have invested no money in electric theatres?"

Vassily Vassil'itch protested he cared very little. No, he didn't like the poetry particularly, but it was considered the best thing in the volume. He didn't trouble his mind about commercialism. Commerce could spoil a nation, but it had no power over him as an individual. It was not his personal enemy. When he looked at the beautiful, and saw it as it was, then nothing else in the world existed for the moment. The evil works of man, his big cities and foolish contrivances for doubling superfluities, he regarded merely as irrelevancies to life. "You are fortunate," said I, "but perhaps you will find these irrelevancies rather self-insistent in a few years. Russia, you know, is entering upon a new era—the era of her commercial expansion and development. English capital, for one

thing, is pouring into Russia as a result of the *entente cordiale* and of the bad conditions of investment in our own country."

Vassily Vassil'itch waved his hand. He had been a politician and economist in his own time, but he read the *Vedimosti* no more. He didn't believe he had any power to touch or check a nation. "Enough for me to live my own personal life, according to my light," said he. "I don't believe in 'reaching the masses.' Of course when I meet a man face to face and heart to heart, I should say to him what I thought sincerely. I might constrain him a little. That is different. That is what I in my turn hope for from the new Russian poets and thinkers, that they will not appeal to the many, and rage over wide-ranging follies, but that they will speak to me as if in all the world there were only the two of us and God. As yet it is only now and then that I am permitted such intimacy, but I recognise that the power to find it lies partly with me. Since I realised this new desire I have come wonderfully into touch even with the least likely of men. It is strange, but even in the most humdrum, most prosaic, irrelevant passages of a book, one sometimes comes across the real feeling of the writer—something let fall accidentally, something sprung from a random seed like a wild flower."

"By the way," added Vassily Vassil'itch with a charming smile, "prose itself is an irrelevance—is it not?"

XXIV

FORDING A WIDE RIVER

THE night was calm and warm and starlit, and far over the placid sea in pin-point lights the celestial ones were reflected. The moon was accompanied by many attendants, and she seemed to be upon a throne. From Vassily Vassil'itch's window we looked out upon a wondrous scene, the whole majesty of the night over the coast. The dark-cloaked hills sat above us like sentinels, the little town down below twinkled with little lights; we distinguished the lamp burning at the pier head, and, like an outpost of the land far out at sea, the triple lanterns of a steamer at anchor.

Vassily Vassil'itch begged me to stay, but I could not on such a night abide under a roof. Late though the hour, I did not fear but that I should find a couch awaiting me upon the Southern Road. So I said good-bye. My friend pressed me to take several of his books, which I stuffed into my pockets; into my knapsack, as I discovered later, he had secretly conveyed boxes of grapes and pears.

So I went out into the night, full of warm thoughts and ideas that worked happily together. How good it is to meet such a friend far from home, in the midst of one's travels!

My bed was in a hollow between two blossoming rhododendrons. For a long time I lay and did not

try to sleep. I looked far over the starlit sea; I stared at the dark branches of rhododendron so black against the sky above me. It was a glorious night, the most magical and intoxicating of all that I had spent with the stars.

And it was the last of the year. Shortly after midnight a cloudbank rose in the sky, detached itself from the horizon and climbed to the zenith; after it came a second and then a third, and many attendant mists and wraith-like spirits who spun off webs from north to south and east to west, increasing the light over the earth and sea at first, as they gently veiled the moon, but at last obscuring all. Watching their progress, my eyelids closed and I slept. But when I awoke in the morning the sky was overladen with lead, and all had changed. Indeed all had changed, and very decidedly. At that midnight rising of the cloudbank Autumn herself had arrived. The curtain was drawn down over peerless summer weather. I did not sleep out again that year.

Next day, under overcast skies, I tramped half the way to Otchemchiri, passing the ancient monastery of Drand, to which and from which many pilgrims were going. The road was very broken and dusty, and led through a low-lying widening strand between the snowy Caucasus ranges and the seashore. There was a considerable amount of forested land from Drand onward, many sequestered tobacco plantations and ill-kept Abkhasian farms. The malarial marshes appeared to exert an evil influence even on the vegetation, which was in many places disease-stricken. Running water was not fit to drink, and was even unpalatable when used to make tea. The nearer I came to Otchemchiri the more deserted the locality

became. I was fortunate to find an empty cottage twenty-five miles from Sukhum, and there in some trepidation spent the night. Next morning the autumn clouds matured to rain—all day it poured torrentially, so that I did not care to go on. Next night again the rain continued, and up to twelve the succeeding day, when it moderated to an intermittent drizzle. The only habitué of the hut beside myself was a miserable deaf and dumb savage who was homeless and masterless. But several Mingrelian horsemen, attracted by the unaccustomed smoke of the fire which we had made, came in and spent some hours warming themselves and sheltering. It appeared the cottage was a well-known one ; no one would occupy it now, three families having been mysteriously murdered there one after another, by the agency of an evil spirit, they said. I did not feel very tranquil at the receipt of such news, but I dared to sleep a second night there all the same.

At last I set off in the drizzle, making somewhat of a forced march to get to Otchemchiri. The road was not so heavy as it might have been, considering the rain that had fallen, but it was nevertheless muddy beyond words. As I wore stout boots, I took the mud with some indifference. It was even pleasant to walk in the mud, and I went forward with that steady stride which comes after one has walked two months with unblistered feet. The diminution of the distance in such cool weather was, moreover, something easy and unusual ; I felt the surprise which comes to the bicyclist when he first rides from milestone to milestone and finds the distance so much less.

But what a road it was! North of Sukhum the

THE SOUTHERN NIGHT

road is well kept. One could not wish for anything better. But south of it,—*ne dai Bog*, as the Russian says, "God grant we shall never see the like again." I imagine that since the Turkish War of 1878 not a hundred pounds has been spent on it. Woe to the automobilist who thinks thereby to reach Batum. It is without post-houses, is bridgeless, broken, filthy, something to exhaust all vocabularies of abuse. The high-road has a way of disappearing, as vapour does, into the air. Floods seem to have come periodically, and to have wiped out the road as one would erase it on a pencilled map. You were walking along the way, abstractedly, thinking of other matters, and then suddenly you look round you and find the road gone. Where is it? 'Tis here, 'tis there—'tis gone.

I had come within five miles of Otchemchiri, and evening was dissolving into dark night when I found myself in such a predicament. I may say I intended to sleep in a hotel in Otchemchiri, for the rain had not only soaked all the outside world, but my garments as well. I suddenly came to a full stop. Five minutes before, I had most certainly been on the high-road, and now I was in a meadow. I turned back, and followed my own footsteps to the degenerating road. I found what was assuredly the highway from Novorossisk to Batum, and it ended abruptly in a waste of mud. What generally happened to traffic at this point I couldn't imagine for some time, but at last I noticed that I had myself, with sub-conscious purpose, followed a faint cart-track, and upon an investigation I found several similar tracks leading in various directions. Still I could not understand this strange split up, but I took the most deeply marked track and went forward. This

was a mistake. After twenty minutes I came to a miserable wattle-built hut, outside which stood an ox-dray heavily laden with logs of wood. I went up and questioned the driver,—Where was the high-road? Did he come from Sukhum or from Otchemchiri?

"I live here," said the driver suspiciously. He was an aged but peace-loving Mingrelian, very much out of touch with the world, and afraid of strangers. I told him my plight, and he heard me with indifference.

"There is no road," said he.

I thought this answer to be stupidity. So I asked him in which direction Otchemchiri lay. By the last milestone it was only eight versts distant. I could do that without a road if I could be sure of the direction.

The man led me to his cottage, climbed on to the roof, and bade me follow. Then he pointed the direction.

What was my astonishment to see at a short distance a river, wide as the Thames, foaming in long ripples, and hurrying on to the sea.

"And where is the bridge?" I asked.

"Bridge!" said the man.

"Yes, bridge. Where is it?"

"I don't understand."

"Bridge, the way over."

"Oh! the way over—there is none."

"No bridge?"

"No!"

"And ferry?"

"No!"

"Can I wade across?"

"No!"

"Is it possible to swim?"

"The current is strong."

"How do you go to Otchemchiri?"

"Don't go."

"What! Have you never been to Otchemchiri?"

"Never."

"But it is only five miles."

The old man gruffly beckoned to me to come down from the roof and stop babbling.

"And how do the other people come across?"

"They don't come."

"How long have you lived here?"

"Sixty-four years."

"But surely in sixty-four years some people have crossed to Otchemchiri. My map shows an unbroken chaussée, a 'Division One' road."

My map made no impression on the old fellow. He pointed to the inside of his house, and indicated that I could stay there the night with the pig and the chickens, if I liked. As for people coming over, there used to be a wooden way, but it was washed out to sea long ago.

I saw he didn't know the Russian word for bridge, and that his "wooden way" was the old bridge. I asked whereabouts this lay, and I thought I would satisfy myself that there was truly no means of getting across. I had often met natives who said there was no road when they knew quite well there was a way.

My would-be host was not offended by my pertinacity, and he told me the way to where the bridge had been quite explicitly. I was to follow the direction of the high-road, and go straight on. There were no tracks of carts and horses, because there was

no way, but the ground was solid all the way—no bogs.

Alas! it was as he had said. I found the grey ancient standards of the bridge, all the foundation of a substantial wooden structure, but no cross-beams—nothing on which even an acrobat could have made his way across. It was now dark; I saw no ferry, and despaired of finding one. My only refuge seemed the old man's filthy hut, and my prospect for the morrow seemed very laughable. I should have to make a great detour to cross the river at a ford; I should have to get over marshes and forests, and wildernesses of stones, in weather that promised to soak me.

I walked disconsolately along the shore. It was a fine broad river, flooded by the rain; shallow certainly at the shore, but swift-flowing over the stones. Yet, what was strange to me, even halfway across it, were great stones not covered by the water. It was almost possible to step from stone to stone to the main current. I wondered whether, after all, it were very deep. As I was thus speculating, I came to a deep cart-rut, and I saw at a glance, that at any rate in normal weather carts found a fording-place here, and could be taken to the other side. I resolved at least to try what could be done.

I undressed, and stuffed my clothes into my capacious sack. What I couldn't place inside I tied outside, strapped the whole over my cold shoulders, and started on my cold, unpleasant, even as I thought, absurd adventure. I waded where the current of the stream was broken by stones, on and on, it seemed an age, and after about a hundred yards I was only just above the knee in water. Here, however, the channel

suddenly deepened. The water, coming straight from the snow-crowned hills, was atrociously cold, and, at the point where I suddenly went up to the waist in it, I nearly resolved to set back for the shore, and spend the night with the aged one. Yet still, gasping and shivering, I followed broken lines in the stream's flowing, came once more to shallows, went into depths again, and again into shallows, and I reached the more solid slope of the farther shore. It took a long time; it would have been interesting to have noted how long by a watch. The current, though not powerful, was difficult to withstand, and at every step it threatened to bowl me over. Of course I shouldn't have feared that so much but for the fact that all my belongings would in that way certainly get drenched, and very possibly lost. It was the queerest adventure I had any night in all my journey —and I reached the other shore, and am here to tell of it.

An hour later I had walked some fresh warmth into my veins, after the icy chill of the river, and I came to Otchemchiri, found its Hôtel France, and ordered the best hot dinner they could give.

XXV

OTCHEMCHIRI

BETWEEN white sheets for the first time since August, I lay and wondered what the aged one was thinking in his hut with the pig and the chickens; whether he had been astonished at my failure to return, or whether perhaps he still expected me in a dim sort of way. I suppose I simply passed out of his mind, as so many events had passed during the long sixty-four years he had lived in his house beyond the river.

The rain, which had never definitely ceased the whole day, came on with great vigour once more at about eight o'clock, and all night long drenched the countryside. I listened to the thresh of it on the house-tops and on the muddy streets, and to the pelting rush of the water from the gutters and gables on to the long-since filled and overflowing rain-water casks. I thought of all the night places I had slept in, and what they were like in such a deluge. On the whole, I was glad to be in a hotel—glad that my wet clothes were all drying in the kitchen, and not getting damper in some crazy cottage or under a rain-washed bridge. I lay on a spring mattress, stretched out full length, and the ordinary bed of humans seemed heavenly.

Next day I took things easily, sat at my ease in my room, wrote letters, and read the books Vassily

Vassil'itch had given me, had my meals sent up to me, and I spent a second night at the hotel. For the rain increased, if anything, during the day.

Several times I went out to look at the aspect of the town, but the roadway was such a river of liquid mud that I did not attempt to cross it. I contented myself with walking the length of the footway on my side of the main road.

Otchemchiri is not a very lovely place in the wet. Perhaps it is better when the weather is fine. There are many nice houses with gardens, plenty of pleasant trees and shrubs, and a free and open crescent of sandy shore. It is Caucasian; the population is Georgian, Mingrelian, Abkhasian, Zamazakantsian; Russians are few; there are some Greeks and Turks, but all live peacefully together. It is called a health resort, and takes visitors from the Georgian towns, from Zugdida, Kutais, even from Poti, which is a watering place itself. It is certainly quiet and home-like. The Caucasians of the neighbourhood, though mounted, are for the most part peaceful; they parade the streets in their native attire, and are more of a picturesque feature than a menace. Food is cheap. The little place is rather go-ahead, and is trying to make the most of its opportunities. Every facility is given for acquiring land, which may be bought from the town as cheaply as sixpence the sazhen. Steamboats call three or four times a week, and there is a fairly regular post. What is needed is a skilful canalisation of the roads and drains. There is danger of flood, since the town stands on a tongue of land between two rivers. There must be considerable dampness from the swampy soil, and, when the heat is pouring on to it, a great deal of malaria is in the air.

It would not benefit the town to issue a report on the health of the inhabitants and visitors; but certainly, if such a report were made, it would be evident that the death-rate is very high—higher than that of the places from which visitors come. Outside the world of the comic opera, one could hardly expect that people would go for their health to a place where the death-rate was particularly high. Yet such is the case here, and in Russia generally.

Otchemchiri completed the chain of the Russian seaside resorts that I visited—Gelendzhik, Tuapse, Sotchi, Adler, Gagri, Gudaöut, Sukhum, and I may add Yalta, Aloopka and Balaklava, for I visited them also, though I have not as yet described them. Of all these Yalta on the Crimea is the finest in winter; it would be the finest in summer but for the fact that it is terribly overcrowded during all the schools' vacation. After Yalta comes Gagri, which is a place of real charm, if not of amazing health. Gelendzhik, Balaklava, Aloopka, and Yalta are the healthiest, though even these have their sanitary scandals. Sotchi is pleasant at Christmas, and for the matter of that Sukhum also. No one should visit any of them from England with the idea of staying there, unless he has introductions. Better than the dusty resorts are many of the quiet villages in between.

GAGRI

XXVI

WHAT IS MALARIA?

PEOPLE travelling between Sukhum or Poti and Otchemchiri, probably go in a felucca or a steamer. The highway does not exist except for horsemen. At the very start, on leaving Otchemchiri, I was confronted by another river which had no ferry, and there was difficulty in fording. And the high-road, when found beyond, was almost guiltless of cart-ruts, the only mark being that of the horse's hoofs.

As I only set out at two in the afternoon, it was not my intention to go far. It still rained now and then, and the skies were hopelessly grey. About five miles beyond the river I came to a wayside village, and was obliged to take shelter in a shop whilst the sky belched forth a series of drowning showers.

All had certainly changed in the conditions of my journeying. It was now bitterly cold, and a searching wind made it impossible to rest comfortably in the open, and read or write. I did not go farther than the shop, for I found that the shopkeeper considered his establishment to be an inn.

"You'd better stay the night here," said he; "it's quite safe—at other places they might rob you."

A boy showed me the *nomera*—the apartments. There were three of them, the most astonishing ever offered in an inn for a price. There were three doors

to which labels were affixed thus:—1st Class, forty copecks (10d.); 2nd Class, twenty copecks; 3rd Class, ten copecks. The labels were bits of old copybooks, and the writing a discoloured green. In each class you would be charged a penny extra if you occupied the room with your wife. I was put into the second class, the first being occupied by a hill-chief and his family. A platelayer's shelter on a railway line would have compared favourably with my room. The bed was a long and narrow chest, which looked like a coffin. It had apparently held provisions at one time, and rats had gnawn holes in the corners. It was so ruined that, for all appearance, it might have been a dug-up coffin. For softness, in it a bundle of maize-straw and burrs! No chair in the room, the window so broken that a bucket of water could be passed in and out easily, the floor broken, the door a dilapidated flap hanging on rope-hinges, and fastening to the partition with string.

"*Vot vam nomer*," said the boy—"There's a room for you. *Nitchevo, ah?*—All right, eh?"

I said I should wait to see what the weather was like later on. But truly there was no hope for the weather, and I stayed.

I visited the occupant of the third class. His room had no chimney, but despite that he had a big log-wood fire in the middle of the mud floor. The smoke filled the chamber. The occupant himself sat on a log and crouched over the fire shuddering and shivering; by his side was a pitcher of water and a mug, and every now and then he seized the jug and drank frantically.

He gave me permission to bring my kettle and boil it. So, glad of a warm, I brought in my tea

things, stood my pot on the embers, and took up a log on the farther side of the fire.

My companion sat roasting himself and looked the picture of misery, shaking in all his limbs, even in his knees, which jumped up and down even though his elbows rested on them. And all the while he uttered not a word, but gurgled and whined, "*Hoo-hoo-hoo-hoo!*"

The little boy, who was very communicative, told me that the man had already drunk four pitchers of water and ten glasses of tea that day. He was suffering from malaria.

The host afterwards gave me an account of the fever. If the chickens take it, they die; if a cow takes it, it dies; even the forest trees, if they take it, dry up and die. Man alone can survive it."

I asked what the symptoms were.

He grinned. "You would learn the symptoms quickly enough if you continued living in the district. First your limbs begin to ache, then your head aches, even though the weather be hot you feel cold and cannot get warm. You shudder all over. On the third day you become suddenly very hot and delirious. Your stomach swells. You must then take medicine, go to the chemists and get quinine and stop the swelling. If you neglect to take medicine, you'll probably die. The heat gives way, you become cold again and shudder; then once more you become delirious and hot. You begin to get better, but you have fearful thirst. You think you are well, and then in a fortnight you have the fever again. Water accumulates in the stomach, and if you can't stop it you get larger and larger and you won't live long. What is especially bad about it is that if you once get it you can never be sure that you've quite got rid of it. The malaria

germ goes about in your body long after the fever has ceased. Many people here die of heart-failure; that means that the germ has touched the heart. Many go all bloodless and pale at forty years of age, and die as it were of old age, and that is due to the germ eating up the blood. . . ."

The good man ran on cataloguing the horrors. He was illiterate; he didn't tell what he had read in books therefore. All this about malaria he knew, because it was a common matter—as common a topic in the villages round about as the weather is with us in England.

XXVII

THE ROAD TO POTI

FROM the inn where the man lay sick of fever I picked my way through the mud to Otchegor. The weather was fair if roads were foul, and as I had no hurry to get anywhere I spent a whole day on a ten-mile journey. There were several rivers and rivulets to be forded, and many stretches of road that for mud were much more difficult than rivers. I profited greatly by having stout boots—a good pair of hand-sewn solid tramping boots, heavy and at first use rather squeaky, but in the long run comfortable, far beyond ordinary foot gear. Ordinary pedestrians in the Caucasus generally wear light boots, and walking is thought to be easier in them. This is, however, a great mistake. Light boots blister the feet quickly, and when they cease to blister, being at last accustomed and shaped to the feet, they wear out. But heavy boots, if rather troublesome during the first fortnight, become thereafter commodious easy-curved homes for the feet, boots which the feet know and rejoice in. Wet weather and dry weather are much the same to them, and the more they go through the better they are.

Thus I fared surprisingly well in atrocious weather; I knew each night that the rain made little difference: I should not have to take to the road in twisted and warped foot gear in the morning.

At Otchegor, a straggling settlement of a mile or less along both sides of the main road, I was entertained by a hospitable Georgian, who claimed me as I entered the village. I spent a convivial evening with him and two friends, sleeping afterwards on a couch vacated for my benefit by one of them. An interesting fact that I learned was that at the school most of the children were renouncing their native tongue as worthless to them, and taking up Russian. All the Abkhasians had made this renunciation, and many of the Mingrelians and Georgians—the Mingrelians are a sort of Georgian ; they are of the same race, and can understand one another's language. Both are rather tenacious of Georgian nationality, and feel that the Caucasus is their natural domain, and that they as a people ought not to be merged in the Russians whom they do not in the least resemble. If the children begin to forget and give up their language, however, there can be little hope of retention of nationality.

It is, I suppose, a vain imperial idea that it is better to be a Russian than a Georgian—better to be a Russian than a Persian, than a Turk, than a Mongolian. But it is not only an idea put forward by aggressive Russia. Wandering in Asiatic Turkey, I have often heard the opinion expressed by an Arab or a Syrian that they would be glad if some foreign power would take over the land and administer its government. Many of the people of these struggling nations long for the advantages of the rule of Europe. The Mongolians, be it remembered, appealed to Russia to take them over. Many Turks to-day would gladly give up their independence if only the jealous competing suitors could agree among themselves. There remain in each nation the brave spirits who say that

their own nationality and their right to manage their own homeland are sacred as heart's blood—those who, for instance, would still be Persian though Persia remain in the mud, rather than be Russian with gold and power. For their terms of wealth are other than ours.

The subject races of empires soon lose their foreign physiognomy when the empire has broken down. The country I was traversing was Turkish forty years ago. To-day it is without a sign of Orient power —a quiet Caucasian land just turning to a Russian province. But Russia in her turn has but to relax her grasp, and very quickly all trace of her suzerainty would be gone. Perhaps the only nation in Europe that makes an indelible impression on people is Germany.

It is a pleasant Caucasian land. On the day after leaving Otchegor the clouds passed off and showed a grand snow-field and many peaks. The land is fertile, there is a plentiful maize harvest, and the vine and pomegranate ripen. Every man rides his horse. There are princes on the road, and even princesses, on gaily ornamented saddles over Caucasian ponies. One passes through woods and over bracing uplands, in the sight of ancient ruins, broken-down towers, and castles of a time long before Western history had much significance. The rivers brawl down from the mountains, and the gay horsemen and horsewomen take their horses over them with mirth and splashing. Everyone on the road is handsome and cavalier, hospitable sometimes to the point of roysterousness, but not so predatory as in the more northern region.

Wherever I went I found abundant hospitality. At mid-day I was called into a farmhouse to dinner

by a Zamazakantsian ; in the evening I had supper in a hotel as the guest of an Abkhasian prince.

The latter happening was rather amusing. As I entered the village—a small town it might perhaps be called—an inspector of police, all in the glory of new stripes and buttons, pounced down upon me and demanded my papers. His manner was rather impolite even for a Russian official, and as I felt strong in my English passport and letter of recommendation, I asked him several questions before I complied with his request—Why did he insult a peaceful citizen in the street, crying so loud that all the neighbours could hear? What if I refused to show my papers till he showed me his ? I should be imprisoned: and what would happen if he imprisoned a British subject for so slight a cause? &c. &c. ; and the official was obliged to moderate his tone considerably before he received the papers for examination. He thought I was angry, and he took up a very mollified air, intimating that personally he had no doubt about my nobility, &c., but that his governmental duty overrode his personal feelings. He took my passport, and for form's sake gave it to a policeman to take to the police station, promising to bring it or send it to the hotel where he supposed I should stay. For some reason or other the place possessed a grandiose wine-house and restaurant which called itself a hotel. I inquired whether I could have a room there, and was shown into a rather miserable apartment, where I put my things. Presently, as I sat in the wide open dining-room, in came the inspector of police with a very haughty Abkhasian booted and spurred. I received my passport, and found written thereon a solemn declaration to the effect that it had been viséd at

Zamazakantsian police station, No. 17 of the *okrug* of Sukhum.

The Abkhasian proceeded to order supper for two, himself and the inspector, and the latter called me up and introduced me, whereupon the haughty cavalier ordered supper for three. "Be sure not to offer to pay," said the police officer in an audible aside; "he is very proud, and would take it as an insult." We had a rather amusing supper of stewed chicken cut up by a boy before serving, tomato sauce, and potatoes roasted in their skins. We helped ourselves to chicken, picking up the pieces in our fingers and dabbing them into the pungent curried tomato. There was no sparing of Caucasian wine. The inspector showed a weakness for drink, but he talked "shop" all the time, of thieves and robbers, of stopping Caucasian duels, and the money taken in bribes. He played the buffoon, but was evidently a very slippery fellow in reality. The Abkhasian prince was very gracious, and drank a health to King George the Fifth and another to the British people, another to myself, and so on. His chief social gifts seemed to lie in the proposing of toasts.

Next day, after a comfortable night, I made a long and happy journey to Zugdida. The sun shone warmly, though the wind was cold; it was autumn, but autumn was sunny. I passed through a romantic land of ancient forts and ruins. On the road there were more horsemen than ever, all very handsome and polite. And with them came ladies clad in bright cotton dresses, bearing white parasols in the sunshine. At Zugdida I slept at the house of an old cellarer whom I called Socrates, because he knew that he knew nothing. Zugdida is a fine town at the apex of

an imaginary triangle whose base is a line drawn from Poti to Kutais. It has a large mountain-tribe population, many fine white stone houses, a great well-built covered market-place, and as many shops as in all the Black Sea watering places put together. Its sorrow is that it cannot get connected with the mainland of Russia by rail.

All produce has to be taken along the fifty-mile road to Poti—or rather, I think, forty miles to a by-station. It was along that waggon-laden road that I continued my way after leaving Zugdida. Once more rain had set in, the skies were grey, and the wind harsh and chilling. Once more the mountains were hidden, and with them all that vision of the eternal which should go with the wanderer's steps. The days on the way to Poti were days of sadness. The summer was over, all pleasure seemed to have gone out of my wandering. The road was not high, and yet it was exposed to the moor breeze. It did not snow, but several days it hailed bitterly. I made great bonfires under river bridges and tried to keep warm. In the villages on the way I found hospitality, one day with a Mingrelian farmer, and the next with the Georgian parish clerk of I know not what district. In the latter case I stayed up till two in the morning, assessing the taxes and helping the clerk to count up. He explained to me that the surveyor had come lately and given the figures of the lump sum of taxes due from the neighbourhood. The clerk, with the aid of the ataman, had to portion out this sad burden according to the wealth of the various inhabitants. He had great sorrow in adding up his various schedules and making the total of the distributed amounts agree with the figures of the original amount distributed. He

counted on an abacus. When I added his columns in my head, and gave him the result right off he was amazed; he had no conception of the mental process of continuous addition. I asked whether he thought the taxes would be safely and fully garnered in. He thought they would in time; only several times the ataman had levied a tax on his own account, and he thought there might be some trouble when people were asked to pay a second time. Some would not pay at all; some never had paid anything and never would, rich though they were.

Next day I finished the long straight road from Zugdida, reaching Poti just after nightfall in the most inclement weather.

XXVIII

POTI

ABOUT the neighbourhood of Poti, Jason and his Argonauts came ashore and gained the Golden Fleece. Medea was perhaps a Georgian.

Thus I thought on the road, eagerly imagining what a delightful place I might be coming to. But when once I arrived at the town the thought of Jason or of antiquity was banished far from my mind. The Poti that revealed itself to my disappointed gaze is one entirely of the new. It does not even belong to the present, but to the future. It is now but the foundation of a town, the thrown-up earth of the foundation, the scaffolding of a port, and all the untidiness of the scaffolding. To-morrow, or the day after, it will be one of the most important Russian towns. Then its many wretched streets will be shod with stone, the dust will be laid, the rain-water drained away; the present wretched Caucasian huts and Turkish coffee-dens will have been demolished —high Western-European stone buildings will have taken their place. The port will have twenty times its present business, and be crowded with vessels of all nations. The electric trams will rush to and fro all day, and people of all nationalities jostle one another along its busy streets.

This was obvious to me as I strolled about its

broad open spaces, and watched all the hastening and complicated operations that each day change the aspect of the settlement. It is a human ant-heap in construction, and from all quarters the ants are busy bringing in the materials of building.

The day after my arrival was a clear and sunny one, and the full light seemed to be thrown garishly upon all the disorder and ugliness of the place. Poti as yet has no centre. Two miles from the port stands a beautiful cathedral, lately built through the efforts of the millionaire who has chief control of the town, M. Ermolof. It is a wonderful piece of work, and its like is not to be seen on the Black Sea shore; but it stands apart from the town, as if it had nothing whatever to do with it. No houses cluster round it; the life of the town has nothing to do with it. Yet in the coming Poti that cathedral will probably be the building that will set the type for all manner of grandiose establishments; many houses will be built to its height, and in the same grey stone. The cathedral is the one building of decisive tone that will be taken over from the old to the new. Very possibly M. Ermolof knew that, and purposed that, when he had such disproportionate care and gold spent on the chief temple of this otherwise squalid town. For he had a mental picture of what the town would be.

At present Poti is built on a strand between snow-capped mountains and the sea. It has the Caucasus for a background therefore. Its harbour, thanks to much work upon it, is second only to Odessa. It is connected by rail with Kutais, Tiflis, and Baku eastward, and in the course of a year or so will have a direct railway connection *via* Sukhum, Tuapse, and Novorossisk.

The town area is immense, but there is nothing built on it. As yet, it looks no more than a collection of tool-sheds, village general shops, and low inns. A one-horse tram rattles along the houseless broken streets, conveying a dirty and battered people to and fro on their work. Roughly speaking, the tram runs from the cathedral to the port. There is an open market-place at the cathedral end—a wretched place, much less pretentious than that of Zugdida, but one that satisfies the entirely-working-class population. In the early morning there is a pack of women here, some with baskets of produce, others with baskets of purchases, all chaffering over prices ; jeering, quarrelling, joking, as is the custom at the markets. There are low-built wooden cafés round about, and even at sunrise these are filled with Turks and Caucasians reading the Eastern newspapers, drinking coffee or tea, and disputing among themselves over news.

Away at the other end of the town there are just as many coffee-houses, and the same breakfasts are being made, but at the quayside near by, the work of the dock has already commenced. Already the cranes are at work lading and unlading wares, and the workmen cry in port *argot* a sort of nautical Esperanto.

"*Voïna!* Right away!"

"*Malo po malo . . . stopp!* Little by little . . . stop!"

"*Vera! Vera chut!* Draw, draw a little!"

"*Polny hod!* Full haul!"

All of which sonorous calls refer to the regulation of the working of the crane as it lifts or lowers the cargo from or to the ship's hold. The sound of the cries is mingled with the rush of chain from the dis-

laded crane, or the creak of it when it is borne upward loaded again.

The water of the port is blue and clear, and the dolphins play within sight of the quay. Even at the pavement edge come floating mysterious-looking water anemones, which the Russians call *medusæ*. To Russians coming south, this apparition in the clear water evokes great curiosity, and I had an amusing conversation with a party of peasant soldiers who appealed to me.

"What is it?" said one. "Is it a fish?"

I said it was something between fish and vegetable.

They looked puzzled.

"And it lives?" asked one of them.

"Is it good to eat?"

I didn't think they'd find it very palatable.

"Is it possible to catch it?"

Not easy, I thought.

Two soldiers unsheathed their swords and made dabs with them in the water. At last one soldier spiked an anemone, and announced the fact in triumph. But, of course, when he tried to bring it up to the surface, the sword just passed through the jelly, and the poor anemone turned over and sank to the depths dead. There was no catching them with swords. An old man from a kiosk watched them with some philosophy, and at last offered to catch one with a net. He brought out a big bag-net, and brought a great big anemone up on to the asphalt, to the delight but eventual disappointment of the soldiers, who cut it up as if searching in its entrails for some account of its mystery.

XXIX

REFLECTIONS AT BATUM

IF Poti shows the town in construction, Batum shows it in decay; to take the figure of gold-fields, the one is just being dug up, the other is already ravaged, and the diggers have gone away. One is the gambler beginning to dream, the other is the gambler waking up to disillusion.

Batum, thanks to its naphtha, was once the capital of the Caucasian littoral, but its prosperity has for long been waning. Business has fled. The population remains to be slowly impoverished and to grumble. The city fathers, unable to raise the revenue necessary, are going grey in trying to think out ways of economy. They are reduced to putting out all street lights at 9.30 P.M., as if the curfew were a living institution. The city newspapers declare, with one voice, that the town must seek a new destiny as a health resort. Is not the promenade with all its tropical plants, a unique spot in Russia, even in Europe? Is not the winter climate warmer than the Riviera? This, from the journalists of a city whose earlier industrial necessities have allowed the railway to run down its chief street, on its way to the dock. Fancy a town health resort down the main street of which charge goods trains, with engines hooting, whauping, bellowing!

Batum is full of sadness. It is, one might say, a

city in exile. It is unwontedly conscious of itself, and its mind and soul are at the mercy of the observer's gaze. In the atmosphere of Batum is much that helps one to understand all Russian cities. For Batum has no glamour, no proud self-assertion, as the others have. It has not their full pockets; for it could not borrow money easily in any foreign market, as can Moscow, Nikolaef, and the rest. For lack of that foreign money it is bare and naked, trembling at itself.

What struck me chiefly was the superimposed nature of the civilisation of the town. Batum even in its decline has its rich, living on their private means if not making profits in the town's industry; it has its shops, its comfortable houses, its "indispensable" luxuries, and all that we are accustomed to see in any town. And yet, somehow, the thought strikes one that nothing in the town is paid for; everyone is living on credit. Of course, I do not mean that I literally think that most of the people are in debt to their shopkeepers. Much worse than that. The whole community is absurdly in debt to someone for its mode of civilisation. The civilisation does not express the people.

Is it not a strange fact that in every city of Russia it is possible to find all the luxury of the cities of Western Europe, all the modern conveniences and inventions, and everything in its proper place, and yet the Russians as a nation have not themselves manufactured those articles of luxury, nor invented a single machine that has made a luxury for them or shaped a convenience? Of all our artificial Western life which the Russian has taken up, the Russian people are utterly unresponsible.

The Russian technological student has to pass an extraordinary examination of sixty subjects in order to take a post as engineer—an examination much more difficult than he would have to pass in England or Germany. But, of course, he passes it all right. The Russians are the ablest assimilators of theories the world has ever seen. But what do they do when they become engineers? They order machinery from abroad and check specifications; they undertake the investigation of Government jobs, write reports, take large salaries, and gather immense quantities of "graft." If the job is carried through successfully, it is nearly always because the practical intelligence of an Englishman or a Frenchman has been called in. Wherever there are factories in Russia, either the whole control is foreign or the *mécaniciens* are foreign. The machinery itself always comes from abroad.

In the English sense, the Russians have absolutely no industrial gift whatever. They have no practical understanding of machinery and business beyond that of using other people's brains. They *do* know statecraft. They *do* know how to speculate in land. They *do* know how to make the most of the hold they have on the land of their country and their birthright. They *do* know how to master, to command, to bully, to deceive. They *do* know how to introduce foreign commodities and sell them in their shops, how to get for themselves all our luxuries and our superfluities without even having helped with a practical idea towards the great sequence of mechanical inventions that enables the English of to-day to live as they do. With us English it is all organic: we are realising ourselves in it. But the Russians?

It is very pleasant to ride in comfortable trains, to

have superb automobiles, to practise "flying" in aeroplanes, to lounge in English clothes, to have wives and daughters in Vienna boots and Paris robes, to live in houses "of every convenience," to have white-tiled lavatories and fittings direct from the English potteries —but is it not all strangely irrelevant? I could understand it if the Russian had an interest outside these things, but it is in them that he lives. They are for him the breath of life. He could not contemplate living without them, except with terror.

This surely is amazing.

Well, on the shore the Municipality of Batum have a kiosk, and they hope to raise a little revenue by charging visitors one penny to read the *Russkaya Smeesl*, the Russian Idea. Well might they read it! I wonder what notion they get of what the Russian Idea really is. Every nation has an idea, or it is not a nation. We English exist by virtue of our national idea, and that is plain enough; we borrow nothing. But what is the Russian national idea? Is it realising it anywhere, as we English are, all over the world? Is it not perhaps going very far astray by following after us and sitting, uninvited if welcome guests, at our table? They may sit there if they like, of course, but hadn't they perhaps better be going?

In this question lies the whole true criticism of the state of modern Russia. Most people believe that Russia has in front of her a wonderful future. There is extraordinary unanimity on that point. The thoughtful say it because of the evident genius of the Slav race; the commercially-minded say it because of her vast mineral wealth and her undeveloped industrial possibilities. This commercial idea is one that comes from the West, even though it is occasion-

ally voiced by the discontented peasant and workman. The other idea, that of the genius of the Slav, is free as wisdom itself, and comes of no Western selfishness. The Russian has it himself, and may think it vanity; we have it, and we take it to be the bed-rock for Russia's future.

I believe Russia has an extraordinary greatness to be attained through her Church, through her national institutions, and by virtue of her national landscape. It is a greatness that starts from the peasant soul, that draws out of all the store of national tradition and belief and experience, as the harvests grow rich out of the black mould that was once her forests. The cultivated and educated Russians must not lose their peasant souls. Through these they must draw out of the depths of their past, they must find the true shape of their future, the true colours, the true perfumes. It is perhaps not even actually *from* the peasant soul itself that inspiration must be drawn, but *through* that soul from the spiritual deeps of God. For the peasant is the root, and the root draws up mysteriously from those depths that which is its own, that which God has provided.

In short, it seems simple to the point of absurdity; if the Russian is going to grow his own blossom he must find his sap through his own roots. He must find that idea of his.

. . . . . .

"*Vot nasha edinstvennaya russkaya mashina!*—Here is our only Russian machine," says my host, bringing in the samovar. "That's all that we Russians have ever invented. Stupids!—that's what we are."

My host knows that I am English, and takes it

for granted that machines are my only interest. His remark was, of course, a stock one. I have heard that phrase applied to the samovar at least a score of times. One takes the confession lightly, and yet in a land like Russia what an amazing confession it is. "Never mind," I always say, "the Russians have something better than machines."

My host at Batum was a tradesman who owned a large house, and let it out in rooms and flats, as is the custom in Russia. My room had evidently been his own bedroom at one time, for it contained the wedding ikons which he had apparently forgotten to remove. They were swathed with the embroidered towel in which, on the marriage day, is held the marriage bread. It was of white linen, on which were embroidered beehives in bright red cotton. As it pleases me to see national customs kept up, I did not forbear to speak of them.

I needed not to have felt shy; my host was quite ready to discuss the cloth, and he actually took it down to show me.

"Machine-done," said he cheerfully, as I took it up to examine it.

"Yes," said I in astonishment; "it doesn't look like those I have seen before in peasant houses."

"No," said my host, "the old sort are all going out now. It isn't worth while spending so much time just to make a pattern. The old ones used to cost three roubles, but this only costs one, and it's quite as good."

I called to mind an evening I spent with a friend in London. That friend had turned aside from his earlier vocations to take a post in a great firm of embroidery and lace. I opened my little collection of

peasant-done embroidery, and began to show what I considered its wonders. My friend picked up each in turn, considered the design, examined the home-spun linen, and then said, wrinkling up his nose, "We have some needles that would take off that." Only to one that I showed him did he say otherwise; that was in the case of an elaborately worked picture of peasant children picking mushrooms, and he said it might be reproduced by machinery, but could never be worth while.

"But, my friend," said I to the landlord, "don't these beehives on your towel mean prosperity? How can you expect prosperity from machine-made towels?"

My host sniggered.

"I should reckon it's all the same," said he. "One is as good as the other. Or mine is better, for I make two roubles profit on it straight off."

"Cheap fish make bad soup," said I.

"But this isn't fish."

"Well," said I, "I should like to know how many years you've been married."

"Ten."

"And you've had that towel swathed round the ikons all the while?"

Yes, he had had it there all the while, an English-made, machine-made, Protestant-made towel wrapped round the ikons of the Orthodox Church! I pointed this out to him.

"If that towel could bring prosperity, it would bring English prosperity, since it is itself English. Don't you see that, as a Russian, the only prosperity you can enjoy is Russian prosperity, and that you ought therefore to have draped the ikons in a hand-worked towel?"

Russians allow themselves to be talked to like this. My host was a most agreeable fellow, though somewhat dull of understanding. He thought he would prefer English prosperity, and in that preference he voiced the whole situation. It was in vain that I mocked him, asking if he could speak English, or if he knew of any common ground on which he could take his stand to claim English prosperity: was his mother English, or his wife, was his grandfather English? His grandfather, it turned out, was Ivan Ivanovitch, a serf without a surname, as Russian as a Vologda pine. My host grinned weakly; I saw he was about to take refuge in some fatuous arguments, so I dropped the conversation, for there is nothing more tedious than the bourgeois trying to be funny.

The towel with the beehives my host took away with him, so as to retail with much amusement the cross-examination I had put him through. It remained absent from the wedding ikons during my stay, and perhaps was thrown down somewhere and forgotten.

XXX

THE DEVIL'S CRADLE

IT was at Batum that I met an original character, an ex-priest, by name Ivanof, a man spending his latter years pamphleteering on the state of Russia, drinking, and raging. He was another of the tenants of my host, and the latter thought fit to introduce me. It would be scarcely worth while to describe our first meetings, as the talk covered ground quite familiar to the reader. It was one night towards the end of my stay in Batum that I really met Ivanof vitally, and saw a glimpse, though in the midnight mood, of the mystery of his soul.

I had had tea late, and hardly had I placed my samovar outside the door as a signal that it was finished with and might be taken away to be replenished in the morning, when there came a light tapping at my door, and a young woman who was looking after Ivanof and caring for him asked me to come along to his rooms and try to talk to him.

"He has several bottles," said she, "and I'm afraid he'll drink too much and do himself an injury. So please try and make him talk and lead him to pleasant themes and make him happy. He ought not to drink; he has already had one stroke, only six months ago, and I fear if he has another it will be the end of him."

I found Ivanof sitting in his gloomy study, sur-

rounded by books and journals. On his writing-table a space was cleared, and there stood an ordinary spirit-bottle and a glass on a tray. When I entered the room the old man was staring into vacancy as if he had fallen asleep in his chair. He did not see me at first, but when the young woman went up and tapped him on the shoulder he looked round and recognised me.

"Oh," said he. "Loosha, another glass for our visitor."

"I am very late," said I, rather doubtfully.

"Oh," said he, "late, late; nonsense, we're all late, none of us are late. Who talks of lateness in Russia! Night is the time for man; it is only the cattle who sleep in the night. Sit down, Stefan Petrovitch, drink a glass of vodka and let us talk of destiny. Why do you waste the golden years of your youth in our accursed country? If I had your years and was an Englishman, nothing would tempt me to cross the English Channel. I give you my advice: live a quiet life, don't think about other countries, don't even think of your own country, don't get interested in politics."

Ivanof took up the vodka bottle with a shaking hand, and began to pour out vodka for himself and me. He pushed the glass across to me and then, looking round and seeing there was nothing to eat, he called Loosha to bring in a plate of herring and onion.

I told him I didn't drink vodka. This troubled his hospitable spirit. It was too late to get a samovar, so the young woman made us coffee on a spirit stove. We both thought this rather a good idea, for it would take the old man's mind off the vodka for a while.

Nevertheless Ivanof tossed off his glass, poured out another, and went on with his talk.

"I'm an example," said he. "See my dishonoured old age—see this bottle, the drunkenness, this discontent with God and man. It comes of not minding my own business, not keeping quiet, not slicing off my finger like the peasant in *Peer Gynt*, and living away from men and from men's interests. I've fallen into the cradle—swing, then, and the devil take it. I've fallen into the cradle—ha, ha, ha!"

He laughed hysterically.

"You don't know what that means, eh? You haven't got into the devil's cradle yet. The devil hasn't begun to rock you in the cradle yet—the cradle on the tree of life?"

"No," I rejoined. "I don't know to what you refer."

Ivanof became strangely silent, and stared into vacancy for so long that it occurred to me that he had become oblivious of my presence.

But at last he began again. "This is what it is," said he; "there comes a time in most men's lives when suddenly some surprising event happens which alters the whole prospect of their youth. There comes a time when man ceases to be master of his destiny, and destiny becomes master of him—the time when he begins to go faster and faster without voluntarily wishing it. What is it? The time when a man takes to drink as I have, when he deserts his calling as I have, when he deserts his home as I have. Then the devil gets him in the cradle, and he shakes and shakes, faster and faster, up and down on the tree of life, to and fro—shakes and shakes and shakes till you are dead—

'The hairy hand goes to and fro,
The branches creak and whine,
You cling and grasp and agonise,
And try to get down.
But the devil dances and shrieks and roars,
And sends you higher than before.'

It's Sologub's poem, which Petrof recites at his lectures; he is also an ex-priest, and feels as I do. Have you heard of him?"

He referred to Petrof, author of *Osnova Zhizni*, the famous writer and lecturer on Russian contemporary life.

I said that I had heard of him, and Ivanof went on.

"There comes a point when you get into the cradle. How shall I better explain it? Business gets the better of you; old age, stupid old age, gets the better of you. Often in youth the devil comes to you and says, 'Serve me seven years, and afterwards I will give you the means to live entirely as you please. Do seven years of my work. I know it's not congenial, but what is seven years? I shall give you a handsome reward. You know what that reward is, and that it is sure. Serve me, then.' Perhaps he says, 'There's no God,' or, if he thinks you touchy on that point, he says instead, 'Seven years for me, and afterwards all the rest for your God, and with what increased strength and power!' Ah, but he's a tricky devil. He laughs to himself all the while. If he doesn't get you into the cradle in seven years, he comes up to you with another yarn; points out how young and strong you are, begs of you another seven years for an even greater prize, and if you agree he has you safely. Fourteen years of the devil's work is enough for any man; that was just about my

number. The devil got me into the cradle; he gets almost all of us in time. And he'll get *you;* you're going the right way. But that's not my business. Excuse me! Excuse me, please!"

Loosha put the coffee for us, and at Ivanof's desire promised to go to bed. As she went out she cast an entreating glance at both of us. I must say I felt I was failing in the task of keeping Ivanof from drink, and quieting him. The old man was much excited, his eyes burned as if on fire, his hands quivered in a fever. As Loosha went out he got up from his seat and walked to the divan—he looked like a man in delirium.

"This is it," said he, tremulously taking up a novel of Sologub; "no, that's *Kapli Krovi*—Drops of Blood. Ah, here it is—I have it. I'll read you the poem that tells you where I am and where Russia is, and all of us."

He sat down on the divan where he was, and hurriedly turned over the pages of a book of poems. The first lines of the poem he read with a deliberate, sepulchral voice like that of Fate in Andreef's *Life of Man;* but he quickly changed his tone as he went, mounting at last to a rhapsody of despair and hysteria that sounded demoniacal:

> "By the side of a noisy stream
> Stands an ancient pine.
> And in the shade a hairy devil sits
> And shakes the boughs.
> Forwards and backwards,
> Forwards and backwards,
> The devil shakes and laughs."

At this point the old man guffawed as if he were Mephistopheles himself.

"It is the devil's cradle;
If you fall therein
You must dance with him,
And the devil will laugh till he's hoarse
And shake till you're dead."

How unfortunate it is that the Russian language is not so familiar to English readers as French! Were it so, an injustice to Sologub might have been spared, and I could give the old man's midnight chant of it so much more effectively. Two verses, for instance, end with a couplet which had become a household word with him. He said it half a score of times whilst I was with him this night—often quite irrelevantly, be it said. The words in Russian go—

"Popalsia fkatcheli;
Katchaïsia chort stoboï.
(You've fallen in the cradle;
Swing, then, the devil's with you.")

Above the dark tree is "that inverted bowl we call the sky," and when you lift your hands to it for help it simply cries:

"You've fallen in the cradle;
Swing, then, the devil's with you."

The other verse tells of the populace, many-coloured, many-voiced, whirling and thronging in the shadow of the tree, and when you look to it for sympathy all the answer you receive is:

"You've fallen in the cradle;
Swing, then, the devil's with you."

"The hairy hand goes to and fro,
The branches creak and whine.
You cling and grasp and agonise
And try to get down.
But the devil dances and shrieks and roars,
And sends you higher than before."

When the old man came to the desperate ending of the poem, his voice quavered. It was plain how personally he took it all:

> "I know the devil won't stop
> Till my last breath is gone.
> Swing, then, devil; swing, damn you,
> Higher, higher than the tree;
> Lower, lower, till my brow strikes the earth;
> Higher, higher . . . ah!"

How he bawled that, "Swing, devil; swing, damn you,"—how he gasped at the end!

I expected him to collapse. But evidently he had read the poem so, many times, and was proof to his own emotions. He came over to the table again, and began to talk eagerly:

"As it is with persons, so it is with nations. You think I feel bad about myself, but it is much more about my country. I should be much calmer if my country were happier. You think I address *you* in a way, but I know it's not you but your country that is in the cradle. She got there over that South African war of hers: she's been there ever since. Just as we got there out of the Japanese War and the Revolution, just as France got there after the Franco-German War, and we're all going faster and faster. It's the devil shaking the boughs of the life-tree. You know that tree. It has its roots deep down in the death kingdoms; its topmost boughs are higher than the highest heavens. In its branches they say the storm wind roars. 'Tis there the devil gets us on the hop; 'tis there he makes us dance to his tune. How things have been going in my native land since that fatal December day when they shot down the workman!"

The old fellow clutched his hair with both hands and sobbed convulsively. For some while no word passed between us. Then I reminded him that the day he mentioned was a day in the life of St. Petersburg, not necessarily a day in the life of the Russian nation.

"The life of Petersburg is the death of Russia; the death of Petersburg would be the life of Russia," exclaimed he, quoting Merezhkovsky.

"That is only the epigram of a publicist. You know it doesn't mean anything. Why, there are places in Russia where the peasants don't even know there has been a war with Japan, and thousands of places where no one knows anything of the Revolution. St. Petersburg is not Russia. You are yourself more Russia than she is."

Ivanof smiled and grew placid. He was about to help himself to vodka again, but I gently drew the bottle away, and asked him to come out into the open air and walk a little before going to bed.

He was not very ready to fall in with the proposal, and he took a long time finding his coat. Outside the house we hailed a late *droschky* that had doubtless been waiting outside one of those Russian music-halls and was now going home.

"Take us to the gardens over the sea," I called out to the surprised but passive peasant driver.

In a few minutes we were put out at the palm tree walk, and we moved quietly along to a seat which was in view of the sea, and sat down.

"You English are going to develop us now, eh?" said the old man. "They won't develop poor old Batum any more unless they find some more oil, I suppose. This development by the English means

the exploitation of the peasant. Capital is the devil which makes us all go round. You English are economists, and understand it all. We are learning some of us, the worst of us, and we help you ; others of us are dreamers, mystics, poets, simple religious folk. Ah, well, I don't know how it will all end. It's my torment to think of it. I should never have thought of it at all. I should have kept a quiet, simple priest, living my life in my parish, and letting the world outside do what it pleased. I was convinced the Church was a great fraud. But I know that's all nonsense now."

He paused as it were for me to agree. I agreed.

" The Church is not a fraud—no. The Church is only composed of those who serve God ; the others don't really belong to the Church."

The November night was mild. The sky was veiled in light clouds which moved over the vision of the moon and stars, " unhasting yet unresting." The old man's excitement had passed away, and he was peaceful now by comparison with what he had been before. We talked of the state of nations theoretically and happily, without getting upset over it. Our conclusion was a fortunate one.

" It is only those who are in the rush and hurry of things who are in the devil's cradle. After all, these in Russia are but a small proportion, even if they are all damned. But it would be folly to think that all of them are in it, or even a large number of them. Those who are in are in, and their plight cannot be helped."

" In my belief," said I, " it is the devil himself who is in the cradle. This story is a fiction circulated by

the devil to hide an old shame of his. The devil generally comes off second best in his dealings with man. Even man gets out of the cradle. The devil never gets out."

"Who swings, then?" said my companion, with a smile. "Does the devil swing himself like a chimpanzee?"

"He's an automaton," said I. "A wonderful machine."

"And he will run down—when?"

"I don't know."

"At the Millennium?"

"Perhaps."

"And who wound him up?"

"Lord knows," said I, and we laughed.

Then we grew silent again, looking over the sea and listened to the sonorous breaking of the waves. At last, calm and peaceful, certainly very ready to sleep, we got up and walked back home.

"You know what I believe," said I in parting. "That whenever the peasant lives simply as his fathers have done on the land, with the Church, before God and the Tsar, there is Russia. For the rest, for us cultured ones, there is an individual life to be lived. We have to be true to ourselves and face the facts of our mystery upon the world. The religion of the peasant lies in us all, and it wishes to grow up out of the depths, and blossom through our minds. We are the many-coloured glorious blossoms; the peasants are the dark roots. Each is good in its place, but stalks and leaves are not roots, and roots are not blossoms . . ."

"I know, I know," said he. "And God be with you."

Then we parted, he to his own room and I to mine; he to sleep, and I to lie awake and think unnecessarily and superfluously. But I had accomplished the task of quietening the old man. I also fell asleep before the dawn.

XXXI

LOOSHA

LUKERIA IVANOVNA, or, as the old man called her, Loosha, was one of the devoted women in which Russia abounds. She was one of the many who find their life in happy sacrifice. Without any material reason such as money interest or personal love, she tended and looked after this old pessimist, prompted by no other motive than a love of humanity, perhaps compromising herself in the eyes of some, but having a mind and will absolutely independent of outside opinion or criticism. Of course in Russia women are not so tied as in England; they are more self-dependent, free to go where they like, and do what they like. If at home as girls they are tied to apron-strings, even then, directly they go to the university, these apron-strings are cut for ever. They learn to smoke, to dance at mixed dances till four in the morning, to have their pet men-students, to visit men and women students in their little rooms or shared rooms promiscuously at all hours of the day, to read and discuss all that is "advanced" in Western literature, all in the realm of what is technically called "perfect innocence." They remain pure and noble women through all the imbroglios of Petersburg and Moscow life; perhaps it may be said they become pure and noble women through it. They are intelligentia. Yet, strangely enough, they carry with them

much of peasant feeling. I remember Loosha told me one morning how cold and shivery her breast and body felt on the morning of her examinations, all covered as she was next her skin with metal ikons.

Ivanof was not her only case; she had her *bedni*—her "poors," as she used to call them to me in English—all over the town; whom she visited, knew all the stories of, helped, collected money for from the rich. Even the poor homeless dogs, Loosha had a care for. Here at Batum a man comes round with a high cart at dawn, and catches all the homeless dogs, and puts them in the cart. They are taken away, and if not claimed within a certain time they are poisoned. Often Loosha would pay the sixpenny fine on dogs, take them indoors and feed them, and then run about the town afterwards, seeking to find homes and masters for them. Poor Loosha! She always had three or four mangy dogs about her when she went into the street; they knew her love for them, and would come along, prancing on their muddy paws, ready to stand on their hind-legs, put their fore-legs in her lap, and stare up at her with large eyes and panting, half-opened mouth. Ivanof was much amused at this "craze" for dogs. He had no heart for those who were not human beings.

Then in Russia every day, in the acquaintance of such a woman as Loosha, strange events are happening, strange calamities threatening. Russia is not like England, where, as a rule, so seldom does anything occur to disturb the even current of time. Here suicide is a daily possibility, fearful despair is counterbalanced by heavenly enthusiasm and ecstasy, and the personality dashes about between the two extremes. Men are drunken, very often fearfully de-

bauched, sensuality breeding into misogyny. Women are running away in terror, women themselves of no strict order of morality able to feel that to be a man's mistress is almost as satisfactory as to be his wife. Loosha went about as a helper and a mediator.

Besides these problems were others more congenial, more subtle; spiritual problems of men and women in danger of losing their faith, people who felt themselves on the verge of intellectual precipices; there were the unutterable sadnesses of the readers of the poet Fété, who lived in a realm of sorrow saying there is no joy, there is nought but sorrow; or the appalling eccentricity of decadents and impressionists in life who read Oscar Wilde lying naked on their beds and gloated over the pictures of Aubrey Beardsley. All brought their troubles to Loosha, and expected her to help. She was a sort of master-key of hearts. People who would spit at one another knocked up against one another coming in and out of her lodging, and did not take it amiss. They knew that Loosha was open to all, like a father-confessor.

If I gave her a chapter of my writing or a story, she could point out its possible developments, and she saw as clearly as I did what was vital. Directly she began to know me she told me stories, repeated sentences she had heard, with such a gift for essentiality that you would have said she had been trained in the literary profession. Yet it was not so. Her relation towards me was just one of her multifarious complementary relations in the round of her life. She was like Dooshetchka, *Dear-little-soul*, in Chekhof's wonderful story, but she was a stronger woman than that. Dooshetchka may serve to explain something about her. I think the story has not yet been

translated into English. Dooshetchka was several times married, and each time happily. She passed from one life to another without any trouble. To live by herself would have been death. She entered into the life of each man she married as if it were her very own. She seemed to take a new life with each man, and to shift her centre of gravity, so to speak. The truth was, she was only a soul, a dear little soul, and needed to be incarnated before she lived; she found her incarnation successively in the lives of her husbands. It would, however, be unjust and absurd to say that Loosha was simply Dooshetchka; she was a thousand Dooshetchkas in one. She had a living soul to give to everyone she met upon life's road, a real self that she could part with to whoever asked it of her; and varied selves to give to suit the strange variety of her life's meetings.

It would have been strange really to know what was her own individual life, independent of all the give-and-take daily intercourse. She was very self-abnegatory, dressed herself in simple black, lived on a sparse vegetarian diet. Her only selfishness seemed the reading of books and smoking. She smoked all day, even when she went out visiting she carried a box ash-tray with her and a score of cigarettes; she even smoked in bed long after the lamp was extinguished, into the witching hours, the only light to her dreams being that of the ikon, and of the glowing end of her cigarette.

She was one of the more interesting of God's creatures. A slim figure of five feet five, strongly built, but thin through working, fasting, and smoking; of somewhat unusual awkward gait, yet not by any means clumsy or self-conscious; her face was pallid,

sometimes of a corpse-like pallor intensified by her broad dark eyebrows arched above her hollow bottomless eyes. Her face was full of little curves, and when she was talking and thinking the curves became full of animation; her nose had a slightly Jewish turn, her lips were very flexible and turned upward at the ends, her cheeks were lively laughing curves. Her strong wedge-shaped forehead she could screw up in a score of curving furrows. She had a decided, well-formed chin. I am sure she could contradict any person in the world, and, if it suited her, turn the purpose of the strongest-willed person. Her hand was long, soft, and gentle, pale, but with tobacco stains, and her fingers incredibly long. She wore in the centre of her prim blouse a silver brooch of a serpent swallowing its own tail. But what shall I say of her to give her secret? She was unexpected in her movements and manners, dainty on her feet though she often wore heavy shoes, dexterous to the perfection point with her fingers. She never spilt the hot milk as she turned it, top and all, from her beakless earthenware jar to your half-filled tumbler of coffee.

In Russia the browned top of the milk that has been heated in the oven is considered the *bonne bouche* of the coffee. But, I suppose, never in all her life had Loosha taken it for herself unless it was forced upon her by a trick.

I asked Ivanof why he had no hope for Russia in the face of such a life as hers, and he told me his theory of her existence. "In the days of the second Alexander she would have been different. She would as like as not have been a revolutionary and an assassin. That was the morning of Russia.

To-day, if you will look at the clock, you will see that the hour has changed. Then the spectacle of Russia's possibilities was beginning to pass in review before the eyes of the intelligentia. Time and the contemporary history of France were showing it. We leapt to forge our destiny. We made our bid to hurry on evolution, and through all the phases of national life since then till the recent horrible overthrow of the intellectual movement, we have spared neither life nor happiness, nor security from torture and pain, in order to work out our own salvation. But now all is lost; everything has fallen. We have all sunk into a time we never contemplated. You know that in the revolutionary struggle, in that year of crisis, not half so much vodka was drunk in Russia, not half so many suicides took place, there was not half the adultery and immorality. Everybody was waiting to see. Everybody was expecting the new time, and was ready to enter on a new life, with new hopes, new-born hopes I should say, which they would have to rear. All that three generations had been working for depended on the cast of the die, and if we failed—well, we did not dare to imagine failure. We did not dare—but failure came all the same. All came down in wreck about our ears. We were beaten, and a great revenge was taken upon us. What of that! No revenge could cause us more pain than the failure. Nothing could be more terrible than our despair, than the hurly-burly that our world became. We all went mad. Then the drunkards began to drink again and curse God—curse God and drink double, and the sensual dived deep into debauch, taking down with them the pure and the

noble who had lost hope. Our world became hell. It is like hell to-day—the devil's cradle, as I said, and the devil is working with a will.

"Loosha of course has a calm heart, as have many. She can suffer and live on and smile. She did not mean to despair just because the world seemed without hope, without purpose. I think she came to the conclusion that there was one thing left for all of us, that we be kind to one another. If she would give you her gospel, and of course she would not, it would be in two words, 'Be kind!' She belongs to a whole sisterhood who have that motto—not that they have their names written down or are much known to one another. Yet Loosha knows six or seven like herself, and when some of them get together it is amusing. They will try to serve each other and give each other good things, and all by habit refuse the service and the good things offered."

Perhaps the old man was right, and yet perhaps he was not. Loosha's attitude was not entirely summed up in the motto of "Be kind!" Did she not read books, did she not smoke deep into the night after even the despairing had fallen asleep?

I showed her one day a story, and she took out a line, "The picture hates the frame which doesn't suit." "That just refers to me," she said. "All this life good enough though it is, is rather irrelevant. It is a sort of cowardice I feel, a shameful taking-refuge. It is shameful to take refuge from one's own soul and one's own soul-questions. Yet that is what I do Some day I shall say when we're having coffee 'To-day I am going away from here for ever, and from all these people. Nothing here has anything to

do with me. I'm sorry, but I must go.' Yet I shall be pained to go. How can I leave my 'poors' and my dogs? No, I am a coward. I do not face things. I ought to go far away and live all by myself, and find out all there is to know, what I want to be and to do. Yes, I admire *your* life. I should like to wander, and go to desert-places, and find out and understand. I shall stop all this one day, but I can't say when it will be."

"Perhaps when a new voice comes out of Russia calling you?" I hazarded.

She smiled, but did not answer. She never disquieted herself by saying more than she was sure she felt and believed.

. . . . . .

How kind Loosha was, and to a mere chance acquaintance! I ought to say, however, that she didn't believe in chances—everything to her was a sort of offering of destiny. Several times she divined my needs, and when I wanted books or papers or information, or even utensils for my journey, she put me in the right way of getting what I wanted. As a rule, Russians can give little help about what they do not absolutely know; they are so unpractical. But Loosha was safe, never wasted time, and set about things in the right way. When I left Batum she unexpectedly bestowed on me provisions.

Yet, I protest. I am materialist in my illustration of her kindness. It lay first and foremost not in the deeds or gifts, but in the heart. What the wanderer prizes is the indefinable gentleness and recognition in the way a word is spoken to him by a stranger, in the way of the spirit in which he is taken.

But I am still trying to measure and define. When I went away from Batum on my pilgrimage to Jerusalem and the beyond, I carried her welcome and recognition with me to the ends of the earth, even should we never meet again.

URAL SKETCHES

I

TRAVELLING THIRD-CLASS

CHEKHOF gave good advice when he told would-be writers to travel third-class—they would often see astonishing things. Better advice still would have been to go X-class—that is to say, to walk or to go as a hare.

Hares have been my companions on many journeys. The term requires some explanation. Visitors to Russia who know a little of the language must have often been surprised at the wall notice in some railway stations and trains :—

HARES
WILL
BE
STRICTLY
DEALT
WITH

or—

BEWARE OF HARES

or simply—

NO HARES

Of all literary men Gorky has been most often a hare. Mr. Winston Churchill travelled as a hare from Pretoria, I believe. In Russia it is a national means of transit —it is to travel in a train under the seat. To do such a thing in England is scandalous and improper, and

the poor hare is liable to be brought to court, rebuked, fined, and then advertised in red print on all the railway stations where his friends wait for trains. In Russia arresting hares would mean arresting half the nation. Hares travel in the third-class compartments; a man or woman under the seat in second- or first-class carriages is comparatively unusual. In the third-class, not only are there hares under the seats, but the same dear furry creatures up in the luggage-rack. The hares are wonderfully tame, and are often lured out of their burrows when the inspector of tickets has gone by, and may be persuaded to take seats, smoke, and give a very lively account of themselves.

Hares cannot be said to travel third-class, though they make the life of the third-class passengers more interesting, so I put them with the tramp as simply X-class.

In the summer of 1912, after much arduous tramping, I thought to spend some quiet months idling pleasantly among the Ural Lakes and writing my book. I was interested, moreover, to see the condition of the labourers on the Siberian gold mines and of the peasants in the famine-stricken villages. So I made the somewhat familiar 4000-verst journey by train third-class all the way, and saw many rare pictures of Russian life, as the reader may imagine.

We had plenty of hares. On one night in the Moscow train there were actually two women under my seat, each with a baby at her breast; all night long there was the sound of snoring from below, or shuffling, and then occasional baby cries and anxious comfortings. What a place for a baby and a mother to sleep, in among the sausage-peelings, fish-ends, and dirt!

I started from Novorossisk one evening in an

empty carriage, the train only filled up after a dozen or so village stations had provided us with peasants. Third-class carriages in Russia are all wood ; no comfort is provided beyond the opportunity to lie at full length and sleep at night. The back of each bench can be put up at night-time and it forms an upper shelf for sleeping purposes. It is generally rather dark at night, a dozen or so compartments being lit by two doubtfully burning candles. On this first night it was totally dark, someone having removed the candle at our end of the corridor. My compartment held three passengers, and one of the upper shelves was free. At about midnight we stopped at a dark station and took on twenty or thirty peasants more than the train could accommodate. Our single free berth was taken by a man who was carrying in one hand a crippled child and in the other a wretched canvas trunk all in tatters, but tied together with bits of string. My impression was that the newcomer was a very dirty passenger, and I did not feel at all pleased when he shut the carriage window. I begged him to open it again just an inch or so, but he pleaded the low state of his child's health. At one o'clock in the morning we took in a fifth passenger, and he sat down in the space on my seat between my knees and my chest, and I was suddenly awakened by a fat hand smoothing my cheek.

"*Nitchevo, nitchevo,*" said the peasant affectionately. "Don't worry, sleep on."

"How dark it is," said I.

"Yes," said the peasant, "nothing is seen. The conductor has stolen the candle."

"What do you mean ?" said I ; "stolen the candle he has just put up ?"

"Yes, he's a cunning one."

"But explain."

"He can use it again to-morrow night."

"Oh, you mean he is saving the railway company's candles?"

"He, he, he! Yes, saving the candles and stealing them. Railway candles! He, he, he!"

There was evidently some joke that I didn't see.

The peasant explained that the guard sold the extra stock of candles. The railway company had its own factory and supplied the trains with immense quantities for lighting purposes.

"You know where they go to. I always buy railway candles. You go into a shop in Rostof and ask for railway candles. They are much cheaper and stouter."

And the peasant laughed again.

Shortly after this my new acquaintance was able to take the bench opposite me, for the peasant woman who had been sleeping there got out at a little station just before two o'clock.

I fell asleep once more, rocked by the pleasant movement of the slow broad-gauge train. Occasionally people got out with great bundles, and others got in with similar bundles and fumbled about in the dark carriages, feeling my feet to see whether the seat were free, occasionally sitting down on them without any "by-your-leave," and remaining in that mutually uncomfortable position till I shifted my legs to make a certain amount of room. I was aware subconsciously of the sound of the station bells, the snore of passengers, the odour of *makhorka* and sheepskin, and the general murmur of the train stealing over the lines through the dark forests or over the ploughed uplands.

At dawn or even before it I was up and had my kettle out, had put tea in the bottom and received boiling water at the official samovar in one of the village stations. Having had tea, I repaired to the first-class lavatory to wash and dress.

When I came back the man with the crippled child was stirring up above. I viewed him with disapprobation; he was so dirty, so ragged. I opened the carriage window at a station where the train waited fifteen minutes, but even then he objected to the draught and it had to be closed. His child, however, asked for something to drink, and he went and brought her some cold water, promising tea when they got to the town. I offered some of my remaining tea, and he took it for her with gratitude.

I had regarded them with detestation, but having befriended them even in such a trifling and mean degree, I suddenly lost my disgust and felt a new-born interest.

They were about the most miserable and unhappy pair of mortals I have ever seen, at the very extremity of penury. Everything they possessed cried out that they were poor. When I watched the old fellow open the wretched trunk and turn over the rags inside, rags that a ragman would scarcely stoop to pick up, I thought of Jeremiah and Azorka in Dostoievsky's novel *Injured and Insulted*, of whom Vania said every movement cried out, "Oh, we are poor, we are poor; oh Lord, how poor we are!"

Evidently the father was a widower. He dressed the child himself, and it was noticeable, despite his sour face and horrible garments, that he treated her very gently and dearly. It was truly because of her that he had refused to have the window open.

All the interest of the carriage was suddenly centred upon the father, for when he got down from his shelf, a buxom peasant woman, who had felt her heart go out towards the child, began to question him. Why did he not take the child to a hospital, or take her to a miracle-working ikon and have her healed?

The father answered briefly that he did not believe in hospitals.

At this point a hideous beggar came into the compartment and offered a bill to the peasant who was sitting beside the father of the child. He passed it on to me, and said, "Read it aloud, brother, so that we can all hear it. I can't read, I'm sorry to say."

I read out:

> "*Dear Christian brothers and sisters, call down God's vengeance on the Turks. I am an orthodox Russian, whose native village is Kaminetz. Last year there was a massacre of Christians by the Turks, and my tongue was cut out and my eyes gouged because I had seen a vision.*"

The beggar was indeed eyeless, and on my completing the reading he opened his horrible mouth and showed he had no tongue.

He collected a few farthings, and then went on farther.

The buxom peasant woman continued to look lovingly at the crippled child, and to ply the father with questions. The latter had a pale, thin, grimy face, melancholy eyes, and dark matted hair falling over a starved white brow. His was a face that only could not shed tears. He did not wish to speak, but at last, as if pestered to words by the kind peasant woman, he began a speech in a hollow voice:

"I do not believe that God works any miracles either in monasteries or in hospitals. I have lived in Kief; I know all about the ikons, but I do not believe. Since the days of Christ on earth there have been no miracles. And I am glad to think it. First of all let us seek the Kingdom of God, but not health. Why should we all want health; out of health often comes satiety. You look at me and offer consolation, but I thank God for my afflictions."

Fancy such a speech coming from such a miserable, degraded-looking passenger! I felt thrilled to the marrow. The old man looked up to the carriage roof with shining, tearless eyes, and I am sure he felt glad to have uttered his truth. No one said anything further to him, and he began once more to fuss about his crippled child, putting her ready to take out of the carriage at Rostof station. In the third-class you do see astonishing things.

At Rostof I had to change for the Moscow train, in which I had to spend a day and two nights in order to reach Kozlof, where I must change again. On the platform at Rostof were two parchment-pallid peasant women lying at the point of death—poor, famine-stricken, wretched, brought by my train from their native villages, and now waiting for a conveyance to the hospital. They were apparitions of death.

My next train was a crush; all the seats had hares under them, and every corner of space was filled up. Even in the ladies' compartment there were hares, and the air was thick with the smoke of scores of cigarettes. I may say that since the peasants can't read, it is impossible to stop the men crowding the women's compartment, or to expect "no smoking" notices to be regarded with attention.

There is a saying in Russia, "*Vso vospresht-chaetsia a vso dosvolaetsia*"—all is forbidden, but all is permitted. It is a most true saying. In this train there was a notice on the walls: "Because of various unpleasant incidents in the past, the railway company respectfully begs that ladies will not undress in the railway carriages." This might have been thought to be rather superfluous, and certain not to be infringed. Yet in this very train two girl students, going to the University at Moscow, spread themselves out comfortable beds with quilts and sheets and large, soft, white pillows; then sheltering one another from view with outstretched brown shawls, they saucily slid off their outer garments and slipped into bed as at home. In the morning they dressed behind the shawl screens once more. Of course it would have been more comfortable for them to have travelled second, but they were poor and had no conventional ideas.

The day was enlivened by the strains of a blind musician playing a concertina, and by innumerable and hilarious conversations. The smell of sheepskins and tobacco grew intolerable to me—I generally have so much fresh air that a day's tobacco-smoke is more tiring than a day's tramping. I tried to find a fresher carriage. At the far end of the train there were three empty compartments specially reserved for officials and soldiers on government business. I sat down in one and waited to be turned out or questioned. Presently along came the ticket-inspector. I offered him twenty-five copecks (sixpence) to allow me to remain.

He took the money silently, put it in his pocket and went out. I thought I had succeeded in my bribe. But in a minute he was back again.

"How far are you going?" he asked.

"Kozlof," I replied.

"But that is 500 versts; twenty-five copecks is not enough . . . you must give me fifty."

"Oh," said I, "then I'll go back to the ordinary compartment. Give me back my twenty-five copecks. I suppose you want to see my ticket." I took out my ticket to have it punched.

"What?" said he, "you have a ticket? I thought. . . . That's all right, sit where you are. I thought . . ."

He thought I had no ticket.

I stayed a long while in the spacious empty carriage and read a book. Occasionally passengers came in at wayside stations, tipped the guard and took seats either in my compartment or in those near, and I understood the chief use to which the "official waggons" were put.

I entered into conversation with a commercial traveller.

"It's fresher here," said I.

"Yes," he replied, "like travelling in Poland on a Saturday."

"How's that?"

"No Jews."

I laughed. He went on:

"Whenever I have to go to Warsaw or Lodz, I try and start off on a Friday night. It makes such an immense difference. There is always plenty of room, less smell, and one's things are safe. Nowadays it's difficult to go through the Pale without losing some of one's property. Almost the whole of the population are thieves—the men part . . ."

I said that I had lost things in Poland myself—an overcoat, a hat.

"Well," said he, "you know every carriage in the Polish train has a notice from the Chief of Warsaw police warning passengers against their fellow-passengers. 'Many passengers on this railway are thieves,' the notice says, 'and they only travel to steal'—the purchase of a ticket is merely an investment of capital, and not a bad investment neither. The notice warns you to hide your money more deeply, and to keep guard on even large trunks, and even on the parts of one's attire. Of course quite right. I was travelling to Kief one day last winter. I was wearing a new fur hat; it was firmly fixed on my brows, and despite the fact that my head nodded every now and then with sleepiness, the hat did not fall off. I dozed. . . . Suddenly I was wakened by a wrench at my temples, and looking round me in a dazed way I saw there was a new passenger in the carriage, and he held my hat in his hand and examined it with a philosophic air. I stared at him, and he, seeing I had wakened up, replaced the hat on my head, saying, 'I was wondering if it had Hoffman's silk lining.'

"'It has my own silk lining. What do you mean?' said I.

"'Manufactured by Hoffman,' explained the visitor, with an engaging smile. He was a Jew.

"'I once lost a hat in the train before,' said I, but the new passenger struck me familiarly on the knee and laughed.

"'Yes, yes, yes,' said he, 'we're always losing our hats,' and he hopped off adding that we had come to his station. I immediately felt in my pockets and

counted my parcels in the rack. I had lost nothing else, but think of his audacity taking my hat off my head."

"The Jew has the name of being very honest in England," said I.

The commercial traveller laughed.

"The Jews are the most dishonest people in Russia," said he; "not foolishly and clumsily dishonest like the Russian peasant, but cleverly and skilfully. Nearly all the great robberies are committed by Jews, who call themselves Russians or Poles according to their place of birth. Have you ever noticed that the Jew when he is at large says boldly, 'I am a Jew,' but directly he is arrested for a crime which he has committed he says, 'I am a Pole,' or 'I am a Russian,' or 'I am a Lithuanian.' A clever move! The Jews are a clever race."

The commercial traveller clicked his tongue and nodded his head sententiously. We came to Voronezh station, and he stepped down into the town with his bag of samples.

And I composed myself for the night and the journey to Kozlof. At an early hour in the morning I had to break my sleep and put my things in order ready to change, and then I also stepped down from the packed adventurous Moscow train, and slowly found my way to the hall-like waiting-room and restaurant.

At seven in the morning I got into the train for the short journey to Rtishtchevo, the pronunciation of which name is just a sneeze and nothing more. It was a rainy day, but I was glad to get a glimpse of the province of Tambof even in the rain. I had met hundreds of pilgrims from Tambof in the Caucasus,

at Archangel on the way to Solovetz and at Jerusalem. Many were the pleasant and simple faces of peasant men and peasant women in the train. The atmosphere of the train to Tambof was quite different from that of the train to Moscow.

Rtishtchevo is a town without a pavement, a forlorn little market in the mud, a collection of barrows and stalls and many shops without windows; just a traders' settlement, a market conveniently fed by the trains which arrive at the junction, its customers the agricultural population of a score of miles round.

In the waiting-room at this place I met an Englishman and his wife going to Penza; they also had come by the train from Kozlof, and felt rather depressed at having five hours to wait at such a miserable place. However, we had dinner together, and in genial conversation the time passed easily.

They were second-class passengers, but I persuaded them to come with me third just the short distance to Penza, and in a mingled spirit of foreboding and rashness they followed me into the mysterious depths of an ancient green-painted wooden compartment. The train was an old-fashioned one, and the seats were so arranged that there were no separate shelves for sleeping in at night; the place where ordinarily when sitting you put your feet, was bridged over, so that instead of passengers sleeping on benches opposite one another, they slept three or four a-side on a great flat wooden bedstead. Our journey lasted from five to ten P.M., and the carriage remained unlighted the whole time. Passengers actually sitting on the seats were few, but hares abounded. Whilst we sat and talked and rather wondered at the new impressions, a quite respectably dressed Russian woman came and sat down beside Mrs.

Robinson, the Englishwoman. I felt sure, by a wan expression on her face, she was going to do something queer. Presently she looked up and said to my new acquaintance :

"Dear lady, I have a request to make ; let me get under your seat."

I translated.

We agreed.

She squirmed in under the bedstead arrangement among the litter and peelings, and just before settling down finally to sleep, poked her head up and said appealingly in a rather squawky voice :

"Don't tell on me, will you ; don't tell."

How we laughed. When the ticket-collector came round, Mrs. Robinson spread her skirts widely along the seat like a curtain, and felt she was saving the stowaway. And our hare made her journey safely, as did a score of others whom we had watched crawl in and out in the darkness like strange beasts. Every wayside station saw a new hare crawl out and a new hare crawl in.

At Penza station, as I was saying "Good-bye" to my two English friends, a peasant came up to me and said, taking off his hat :

"Excuse my asking, have they come by an aeroplane?"

"No," said I, "we've just come by train of course."

"We are expecting some Frenchmen who are coming to give an exhibition of an aeroplane in this town. I thought, as you weren't speaking Russian, . . ."

Mr. and Mrs. Robinson laughed heartily. I saw them into a cab, and they promised to try and find me

if later in the season they should travel eastward to the Urals.

I had before me still two days of train-travel, the two most interesting days as far as window views were concerned. Leaving Penza, the Ural stage of my journey commenced, and I was to see hundreds of miles of new country. Alas, that so little can be seen from the window of a train—even of a slow Ural train.

The train was nearly empty. In the dead of the night we crossed the Volga at Samara by a seemingly interminable iron bridge. Stars were reflected in the placid water of the mother of rivers. Next morning we were in the Ural Steppes, the land of Kumis farms, wild woods, uneven plateaus, and grey vistas of moorland with sulky diminutive headlands standing on the horizon. The country was desert, and passengers were few ; the Russian peasant as I knew him in the centre and south of Russia had disappeared, and there came in his place the shrill-speaking Northern Russian, coarse and heavy, the native of Ufa or Perm, not unlike his brethren of Archangel and Vologda. From the Ural Mountains westward to Finland you find the same Russian all the way. Side by side with the Russian sat the Mahomedans of the Urals, Bashkirs and Kirghiz.

The next night in the train took us beyond Ufa into the heart of the Urals. I soon saw shadows of the hills on which I should wander in the summer. The railway line, though in direct communication with Moscow, was a loop one, and the engine used wood fuel. All day we toiled and panted on the hill slopes and made disproportionately long waits at solitary signal-boxes and villageless stations. At the loops of

the line waited endless goods trains, red and rain-washed, labelled in Siberia or scrawled with white chalk, and at each loop we invariably slowed down to enable the guards of the trains to exchange tokens—great metal keys, seeming to the onlooker symbols in a Masonic ritual.

We came to miserable wayside stations beside villages on the pine-clad hills, and scores of women clambered up to us with baskets of wild strawberries and black currants gathered in the forest, and with bottles of hot milk, their men folk, Bashkirs and Tartars, standing by in rags and staring at them. How melancholy sounded the bells rung three times for passengers who never came, and with what relief we heard the long whistle of the guard, and the whaup of the engine preliminary to movement onward once again. Time seemed to be no object. We stopped outside stations to take on stacks of wood; the tired engine snorted like a horse before the steep inclines, and as it pulled, cried *jun*, *jun*, *jun*, *jun*. We moved on to farther loops, and where a goods train was not waiting for us, we ourselves waited, sometimes being patient, whilst as many as three hundred trucks laden with Siberian produce pottered past us, saying as they went, "*What-a-lot-I've-got*, *What-a-lot-I've-got*, *What-a-lot-I've-got*."

The railway track was a raised one, and we saw far down beneath us the dark crests of pines. We moved through beauteous gorges, and diversified narrow valleys, where the ground rose sharply from silver rivulets, and climbed to a great dark height above us. The earthy crags were black and fresh, having great clots of moss and clumps of fern intensifying the blackness. Out of the uneven banks

great pines shot out like pointers, and, looking upward from the carriage window, one saw the firs grasping the mould with their roots, like great eagles with their talons. The day was cloudy; mist hung over the forests that climbed the ranges; every leaf and branch was agleam with raindrops.

The train made long sweeps and circles in order to cross the pass of the mountains, and at last we reached the crest, and near Urzhumka village I saw upon a peak the grey pillar that marks the geographical boundary of Europe and Asia, and the highest point in the Ural Mountains.

A friendly guard came into my compartment to borrow my kettle, in order to make tea for himself and a companion. "We are in Siberia," he told me; "in three hours, we shall be at the frontier town of Chelyaba."

It was soon my turn to step down. Our train, enjoying the momentum of the rush downhill, sped swiftly to Seerostan and Lake Turgoak. The next station was mine, and, as we came into view o Ilmen, the broad dull-silver lake, set with placid reeds, and framed in birch woods and mountains, I shouldered my pack, said good-bye to my train acquaintances, and went out.

The morning was fine, and the air still and breathless; the gigantic pines stood motionless like armies turned to stone, and even the light, wavering birch leaves were motionless. Far overhead the mist poured ceaselessly over the bosom of the forested hills and occasionally up from the rush-grown margin of the lake rose the wild duck with a whirr of wings. Up on the hillside the curlew emitted his melancholy cry, and every now and then came

the raucous "cra-ak" of the capercailzie. There was a faint whiteness in the east, and a rift in the zenith that promised a beautiful day. I had arrived at my summer resting-place, and all things were made beautiful in a new land.

II

BY THE SIDE OF A URAL LAKE

A BOUNDING wattle-made cart took me along an undulating forest road. I sat in three armfuls of hay and listened to the driver whilst he talked of the life of the villages round about.

"Do the peasants make much money?" I asked.

"It depends on their luck," he replied; "some that are lucky never do any work to speak of, but when they do they have great luck; others work hard, but never have any luck at all. Many of us Miass folk have made fortunes, but many work very hard and perseveringly and never find anything. It's just the same as at cards; some stupid people always get a handful of trumps, and others who are clever have to make the best of a poor hand."

I had never heard a peasant speak like that before, and I seriously realised that I had come to the goldfields. I was destined to see another sort of peasant from that I was accustomed to. For the present, however, I had no wish to think of gold-mining or industrial conditions. The Lake of Ilmen, with its pure waters and shores of glittering yellow sand, tempted me to a quiet life, and I sought a cottage in the forest.

My driver took me to the abode of Ivan Ivanitch, a rickety two-storey cottage at the foot of the

spacious pine wood that climbs up the slopes of Mount Ilmen. I lived two halcyon months in the woods, on the hills, and by the side of the great lake.

The forest here is fresh with an unspotted loveliness. At each step you take among the wild flowers, it seems that you are making first footsteps. The air is clear and brilliant; the birch-trees, like graceful maidens in silver, stoop hither and thither, peering with innocent curiosity; the pines are clean of limb and majestic in stature. There is little crowding in the woods; the lovely butterfly which Russians call the purple cloak[1] carries messages from tree to tree, and returns, moving evenly down natural avenues as if she were upon an invisible fairy horse. The sacred rowan hangs gorgeous fruit, like that which the trees bore in the cavern where Aladdin found the wondrous lamp. The cranberry, the service tree, and the raspberry are abloom with promises of gifts to be. The Canterbury bell, in manifold variety of blossom, hangs its rich crimson and blue in every copse, and where the soil is dank with perennial moisture and red-brown with the rust of many metals, the little Parnassus flower gleams, a veritable gem which the fair earth wears, brighter than any stone.

I felt as, when a boy, I wandered out of a wood and found myself in a place which was obviously some one's garden.

Ilmen is quiet as the desert. I spent whole weeks together at a little corner where there was a high bank against which I could rest my back and a pleasant pool where I could bathe. Here I found an old pitch-

[1] *Vanessa Antiopa*, the Camberwell Beauty, so called in England because a specimen was once caught at Camberwell.

boiler's stove and brought it into service. Every day I bought a bottle of milk from Ivan Ivanitch, and, boiling it at the lake side, made myself coffee in which was no water at all but much cream.

The only other inhabitants of the lake side beyond myself were picturesque tramp fishermen in ragged clothes and fearfully leaky boots. Many meetings did I have with them. I had always a companion at my meal, and we ate the best of fish dinners—pike, perch, or bream fried with butter in my tramping saucepan. In the embers of my fire I had always potatoes roasting in their jackets. Some days I even had a second course to my meal, stewed apricots and cream, a dainty dish for tramps. And later on in the summer Ivan Ivanitch's wife gave me huge chunks of bilberry pie. There were rainy days and windy days, when every birch leaf was laden with rain, and when all the pine crests murmured like the waves of the sea. But I built a little arbour by the lake of interplaited birch branches thatched with hay, and in the dim light watched my fire in the pitch-boiler's stove, read, wrote, or chatted with other tramps attracted by the smoke of my fire.

All through the summer five or six fishermen slept out on the lake side, and either for warmth or through fear of beasts kept big bonfires going. It was a strange sight, the glare of the flames seen on the lake water at nightfall; stranger still to watch the unkempt figures of these men sitting on tree-trunks in the fire-light, drinking vodka, gossiping, gesticulating.

The Ural nights were cold, the lake breathed mists in the dawn, and in the forest every leaf was heavy with dew. But the life of the woodsman was in the chilling hours of the morning; he was up before dawn,

and one heard the crack of the hunter's rifle on the marsh, and the cleaving of the fisherman's oars on the foggy lake. There was often a rime on the grass at dawn, and I did not envy the sportsmen who with numb hands on their guns pursued the wild duck over marshes flooded knee-deep in ice-cold water.

The sun was, however, quickly master, and at three hours after his rising the morning was radiant and warm. By that time the net fisherman had dragged his morning catch, and was taking fifteen pounds to the morning market. He might be seen in his cart emerging from the forest, his face solemn and portentous with the self-sufficiency of his catch and the hope of his market. The rod fisherman, the poor old solitary fisher hermit with long birch branch, miserable hook, and self-made float, might be seen broiling his breakfast on the shore. At ten o'clock there was the hot premonition of noon, and the day had become older and more prosaic. The hunting would be over, and the huntsman going home with a string of fat duck and dainty sandpipers on his back, the dog at his heel, the while the fisherman would be returning from the market with bread and vodka.

In July, however, a new life entered the woods and gave new beauty to the noonday, troops of peasant girls and little children all in bright-coloured cottons, in dark red and dark green rags, and in single garments of cheap white print or homespun linen. They were all in bare feet, and carried birch-bark baskets for berries. The forest became a great fruit garden in July; it was difficult to tread without stepping on strawberries; in the compass of fifty yards it was possible to pick eight pounds in a day—and eight pounds of a little stoneless fruit need some picking. Then the

raspberries abounded, fresh, delicious, white-webbed. There were black currants, bilberries, rowan berries, chernikhi, cheromki, and many other tart fruits of the wild unknown to us in England, untasted. Nearly all the berries were ripe at the same time, owing to the short hot summer. Each peasant girl chose which berry she would seek, and devoted herself to that to the exclusion of the others—not that the raspberry girl never ate a strawberry!

The berry gatherers were a very pretty company in the woods, especially the strawberry girls, bent double over the copse under the gigantic pines, and picking out the delicate berries with wet, juice-stained fingers. And they were a very merry lot, ready to flirt with any man who passed, and giving me no end of cheeky words whenever we met. At eve, too, they sang, and as they trooped with heavy baskets, skirling their high-pitched peasant songs along the lake shore, the solitary fisherman involuntarily turned in his boat to look at them. And if any of the tramps should happen to be bathing at the lake edge, they would avert their eyes bashfully and reprove one another for being "curious." The girls of the gold-diggers' families have learned to blush.

In July the woods were altogether lovely. Then it was possible to see five fritillary butterflies at a time gloating on one blossom of sweet sultan, opening and shutting their wings with pleasure—possible to pick them off delicately with finger and thumb, so great was their intoxication. But in August a week of English weather came, autumn breathed on the flowers, and when the sun came out again with his old glory he looked down on disillusion. The butterflies disappeared, the flowers lost charm, even the fisher-

men skulked away in village houses at night, for they knew that the night frosts were becoming harder. Even in August the woods in the morning were white with rime as in winter.

But at noon it was hot, and I lived by the lake side as ever. I saw the silver water slowly framed in gold, and then in crimson, watched the dark green clumps of rushes slowly soften in colour to yellow and to brown—they flashed golden in the August noon, in September they were hoary and dew-decked. The strawberries ceased in the shadowy pine woods, and the girls came gathering mushrooms instead. In October all the birch trees were a flaming crimson like the Virginia creeper in autumnal glory, but the pines remained green. Then the lake froze. They tell me that when it melts again next spring there will be two steamboats on its pure bosom—two dredging steamboats that all day long will tease and worry the alluvial bottom, scooping up the precious mud and bringing it to steam gold-washing works on the "margent of the mere"!

III

THE BURDEN

ONE morning I saw a strange spectacle on the forest road—thirty-four horses yoked to a trolley-car, on which an immense boiler and half a dozen steel bandages were being carried. The boiler, some thirty feet in length, was painted bright red, and the name of its foundry was printed upon it in German letters, white and crabbed. The trolley was a railway car, and no doubt the iron colossus had travelled smoothly upon it all the way from the Russian frontier, and perhaps even from its German birthplace, but it was now having an unhappy journey up country, twenty miles to a great gold-washing works. At the moment when I came out of the wood and saw the load for the first time, it was at a standstill, the iron wheels being stuck in the rut which they had made in the hard but broken road. To the front of the car were attached two wooden shafts and one melancholy old Dobbin stood between, and though there were thirty-three horses in front of him, he was obviously overwhelmed by the idea that he himself was doing all the work. Besides all these horses, there were at least a score of peasants, all encouraging and swearing, cracking their whips and yelling. The horses were all three abreast, except the shaft horse, so that there were eleven troikas, and behind each troika was an empty wood drag on which the driver

stood and shouted. In fact, it was not so much thirty-four horses that were trying to draw along the great iron image, but eleven carts drawn by three horses apiece, and all yoked to one another with rope and leather. There was also one great cable running from each side of the trolley-car to the furthermost horse.

Four or five peasants carried axes, and were employed making wedges and fixing them under the wheels of the car, and one man, the commercial agent of the company, a German, in frock coat and bowler hat, was fuming and fretting, running hither and thither, and spitting out exclamations in the tongue of his fathers.

The drivers had three or four tries, but only broke ropes, and then the foreman of the gang, a tall drunken Russian in a port wine coloured shirt, called all the drivers together, told them to abandon their stands on the carts and walk by the horses instead; he gave some mysterious orders, of which I only caught the words, "village fire."

"Oh, what are you doing—what stupidity next?" I heard the German cry in bad Russian. "Why have we no engine?" But no one paid any attention to him.

We, for our part—that is, some of the fishermen and myself—were immensely amused and interested, and our laughter was in strange contrast to the taciturnity of the drivers and the complaints of the agent. I was beginning to imagine that the great red abomination would have to be abandoned in this forest glade, an object of astonishment for the creatures of the night, its interior a shelter for tramps should the weather turn wet, and I thought of the great tube

that in Mr. Wells' novel fell from Mars and lay in strange irrelevance on Salisbury Plain.

But my imaginings were wide of the mark; the tall man in the port wine coloured shirt had risen to the occasion. He ranged all the drivers by their horses, examined the wedges under the wheels, set the additional peasants and the agent himself to actually push behind with their hands, and then at a signal, and quite unexpectedly to us, all the drivers broke into the most frantic and unearthly shrieks as if they had all gone mad; they waved their arms and cracked their whips, and howled "*E-hey, e-hey, e-hey, pozha-ar! Pozha-ar, pozha-ar, pozhaa-ar*" (Ehey, ehey, a fire! A fire, a fire . . . a fi-err), and then again, "*E-hey batushki pozha-ar! E-hey batushki pozha-ar!*" (Eh fathers, fathers, fire! fathers, fathers, fire!)

The horses went mad, cocked up their ears, tried to bolt, foamed at the mouth, strained, fell on their knees, struggled, got up again, and all the while the drivers beat them unmercifully with their whips. Many horses fell and could not recover themselves, but the peasants rushed in and pulled them up. Then the great column began to move behind them, ominously, terribly, like some immense and baleful engine of destruction.

They got it away, thanks to the genius of the man in the port wine shirt, and it moved away over Russia to the place of its utility. The scared horses neighed as they went, for they thought the village was on fire. A pity, I thought, to deceive the animals; the whole thing was a pity—old Russia carrying in the new to an accompaniment of lies. "But do you know what o'clock it is?" as my friend in Batum would ask. "The sun never stands still."

IV

AMONG THE URAL GOLD-DIGGERS

ACCORDING to Berard there are no Urals; the mountains are a fiction of the geographers, who wanted a long caterpillar to mark the Asiatic boundary on their maps. The academician, writing in Paris, was judging vulgarly, by the height of the alleged mountains. The Urals are certainly not high, but they do exist, and have an extraordinarily distinctive character. They formed a dividing line before the geographers considered the matter at all. They stretch a thousand miles and more from the river Ural to the source of the Petchora, and the country on each side of them is plain. Russia is so flat that the peasant calls the mud-banks of the Dwina mountains, so he may well say the same of the great mound of earth and pyramids of rock that we know as the Urals. From time immemorial the peasant has spoken in hushed accents of the great chain of mountains that extends from the merry uplands of Uralsk to the forested summits of Zlato-Ust. They are his Himalayas.

The Ural landscape is a novel one. The hills are miscellaneous. They rise abruptly, and look like isolated tents. They are of the sort that children draw on their slates—triangles. There are no giants shoulder to shoulder, no grand many-pointed ranges, not even a stretch like our Malverns. And when you

come to know the extraordinary composition of the rocks you may say of them all, they are so many pimples and boils of the world. They are, indeed, a widespread, sulky irruption of the matter in the depths of the earth.

By virtue of their metallic ores the Urals are the most remarkable mountains in the world. The hills are not earth-coloured here, but manifold bright and strange. There are pink mountains that blaze in the sunshine, dust-brown ridges, great teeth of white quartz, gold-studded. In the Urals the scenery of the fairy tale has become actual. You do journey for days through dark woods, and emerge at last to see the moon shining on a little silver mountain. You do come to the lodestone mountain and lose all the brads of your boots. You do find forest hermits who live in caves of green marble, and who have collected and hidden away as evil all the lumps of gold that they have found in the wood. Yes, the Ural is a land where all the monotony of the green earth has gone, where there exists in its stead every rock and metal that men prize as rare and beautiful.

Consequently the Ural is a land suffering from men's gaze. Too many have looked on her greedily, too few with love. She looks back at men hardly. Men also have made her ugly, rending her garment of green, tearing away her masks of loveliness to ravage her gold. D'Annunzio has said, " If you have a thing of beauty, shut it behind seven doors and hide it behind seven curtains," but the truth is the thing of beauty is always behind the seven doors and the seven curtains. It cannot exist without the doors and curtains. The materialist thinks that by pushing past doors and curtains he can get to it, but the truth is that when the

masks of loveliness have been thrown down all that is behind is a death's-head, a passion satisfied, barren gold.

Gold-mining is a sort of rape and incest, a crime by which earth and man are made viler. If I had doubted of its influence on man I needed but to go to the Ural goldfields. A more drunken, murderous, brother-hating population than that of this district I have not seen in all Russia. It was a great sorrow to see such a delightful peasantry all in debauchery. And, reviewing the spoils of the earth on the one hand and the debasement of man on the other, there could be but one opinion as to the profit to humanity. As old Chaucer knew even in his day :—

> "Cursed was the time I dar wel seye,
> That men first dide hir swety besynesse,
> To grobbe up metal lurkyng in darknesse,
> And in the ryvere's first gemmes soghte ;
> Allas ! than sprong up al the cursednesse
> Of covetyse that first our sorwe broughte."

Not that "covetyse" in any modern sense of personal covetousness is a sin of the Russians. The Slavs are far too self-sufficient to covet the possessions of another. What gold-mining does induce is the gambler's mania. the constant thought that one can become rich by chance ; irresponsibility, abandonment to hope or to despair. Then, when the peasant begins to hope too much to find gold or to search too desperately, he is tempted to steal. There are always great chances for stealing gold. And wealth obtained easily or luckily is squandered readily and haphazard. The miner has no culture, no taste, not even a taste for property and squiredom, so that, when at a stroke he gains a hundred or a thousand pounds, it is rather

difficult to know how to spend it. His ideal of happiness has been vodka, and all the bliss that money can obtain for him lies in that. The cinematograph teaches him that women can be bought, that they can be quarrelled over, and that a cruel and ugly revenge is noble and striking.

Miass is a gold-mining village of twenty-five thousand inhabitants—it was my post village, and I had to go there for my letters. It has two churches, four electric theatres, fifteen vodka shops, a score of beerhouses, and many dens where cards are played and women bought and sold to the strains of the gramophone. It is situated in a most lovely hollow among the hills, and, seen from a distance, it is one of the most beautiful villages of North Russia; but seen from within, it is a veritable inferno.

There are in the Urals several villages of the size of Miass. They should all be constituted towns, and a town order should be introduced. As it is, they are not even called villages officially, but factories—this whole immense abode of men and women is called Miass Factory, or, in foreign parlance, "Miass Usines," though there is no factory there. Nearly all the gold-mining villages are called "factories."

I stayed a week at an inn in Miass, the chief inn—dirty, ramshackle, expensive. No street of the factory has any pavement, no road is made, there are no water-carts, and the whole village is ankle-deep in dust and offal. The wind blew up each day great storms of dust, or, shall I say, pulverised filth. Even when doors and windows were shut, a heavy layer of dust accumulated on everything in my room each day. The heat of noonday was appalling, and the flies buzzed in countless myriads.

From my window I looked out on a large scaffolding of a new batch of shops in process of being built. Here all day long twenty women walked up and down the building with hods full of bricks, an abominable work for women and girls. I was much surprised to see women as bricklayers and navvies, and I said as much to the innkeeper. He explained that both men and women worked at the gold-washings, and most families were kept up by the women's earnings as much as by the men's; indeed, in many cases husband and children were kept by the woman alone. He thought that whenever both man and wife worked for their living in the factory or at the mines, it ended in the man being perpetually drunk and the woman having to do all the earning. "The contractors like it," said he; "the women are just as strong, more reliable, and cheaper."

Whenever I went out from the inn the girls would call out, "Hallo, young man, are you married?" Sometimes I would stop and talk to one of them, and the others would bawl and giggle and push one another into me.

The women of Russia are very sober, but I have seen many of these bricklayers troubled not by the length but by the breadth of the street. I have seen them lying in the dust dead drunk.

Whilst I was in the Urals the shops that they were building came into actual shape, with white-stone facing and window fronts. In a year or so they will have been raided several times, and the owners will feel themselves well-established firms.

Round about them lie higgledy-piggledy the wooden stalls of the daily fair, and up and down the fair, parade all day long the most fearsome and bloodthirsty ruffians,

drunken and ragged. Free fights are frequent, and the man with a crimson gash on his face a common sight. "Government Wine Shop No. 9" stands near by, and outside it from dawn to dusk lie drunken beggars waiting for those who have money to purchase drink, and hoping to share a bottle or beg a copper. Further on is one of the cinematograph shows presenting "The Horrors of Life," open from 2 P.M. on Sundays, and attracting more people than the Church does, though the people mostly believe in God and Hell.

Strange to say, the factory has its "gardens" and parade ground, and there again the chief amusement is an open-air cinematograph theatre. The gardens are kept fresh by an immense artificial lake which the inhabitants made years ago for the purposes of gold-washing. The lake covers an area of about eight square miles, and the men and women of Miass work on its shores, digging up the gravel, sifting and washing it with iron sieves and buckets of water. The peasants work in artels, and are paid a shilling a day and a small commission on the gold they bring in. Formerly they found great quantities of the precious metal, but now the whole surface has been sifted, and until mines are bored or new areas taken in nothing much will be drawn from it. Even when, as occasionally happens, a peasant strikes gold in quantity, he generally manages to secrete it and sell it at the price of six shillings the zolotnik, either to the bank or some agent. The district is at present worked by small contractors, *staratelni*, who employ the labourers, pay them wages, and pay also the Government the rent on the land and the royalty on minerals found. Frequently I was taken for a

new contractor and prospector, and men came to me to be signed on for work. Everyone tried to whet my appetite by tales of lucky finds and fortunes made, and I was shown the many grand houses built by people who had in time past struck gold and made great piles. And as I wandered about the outskirts of the lake I saw all the abandoned buildings, the old follies, dug up, cut about, rifled, deserted. For miles around the forest was wounded by great pits dug into the gravel, and seven-foot deep square holes which looked like unused graves. They defaced the countryside, for verdure will not spring from the Ural subsoil but only from the rich pine-mould above it.

What a place to live in from year end to year end! As I lay sleepless in my close room I heard the sobbing of a woman, the occasional smash of a window, riotous shouting and disputing, and often at two in the morning the mingled cries of drunken men and women singing, yelling, sobbing in Bacchanalian processions. To tell all that was happening in Miass in the night would need a Dostoieffskian mind and pen.

Miass being a village had only village police, and one went from day to day and week to week without seeing a policeman. No order was kept at all, and the very worst people in the place, who in an ordinary régime would be forced into the back streets or packed into prison well out of sight, were allowed to sprawl over all the most important thoroughfares and give the settlement its distinctive appearance.

One evening as I hurried to the post I saw a girl of sixteen lying drunk in the street, and another woman was standing over her kicking her violently in the ribs. Such a sight explained to me the terrible procession

of dead children out of the town. The continual array of children's funerals was a most afflicting sight. The cemetery lay three versts from the village, and every day one saw the negligent little procession of tawdry coffin and imitation flowers carried from the settlement to the grave. It was the saddest vision, child after child making that little journey from the place of its unnecessary birth to the place of unmourned death.

Then it must not be forgotten that all about lay the most lovely nature, untrodden forests, pure lakes, innumerable unnamed beautiful hills, far distances, and silence full of bees humming and birds singing. It would seem man does not really care for the beauty of this world; it is something else that he requires, that he seeks; something that he vainly imagines gold will procure—happiness; extra, unearthly, wonderful happiness. And instead, he reaps misery, dirt, despair.

V

JOURNEY TO KISHTIM FACTORY

I SET out one day over the mountains for Ekaterinburg, and varied the quietude of life by the lake with a week of miscellaneous adventure. I rode in a cart to Turgoak, and learnt many things first-hand from the owner of the cart as we rattled along the side of the rye fields. He was a native of Turgoak and was a farmer. The famine had struck him badly, and he had been forced to sell all his horses and cows at ridiculous prices, because he hadn't money to buy fodder for them. Turgoak was a fine place, a resort of fashionable Petersburg people who came there for the summer, but the climate was rigorous and the frosts spoiled the rye. Even this year, though the harvest had been so good in Russia, the rye was failing at Turgoak and for thirty miles round. God did not fill the ears of corn.

I asked about the relief funds, and the peasant agreed that he received money from them. In April he received two cows and two horses from the Government.

"You see," said he, "Madame Kokoftsef comes here each summer, the wife of the Prime Minister, and she promised to help us. But the money didn't come to us earlier than the others all the same. If only it had come before I had to sell my stock! There would have been sense in that."

"Better late than never," I urged. "The relief coming in now will help you over the present bad harvest."

But the driver was a pessimist.

"Perhaps it is God's will," said he. "Perhaps God has cursed this land. And even if He had blessed it, what is there to do? They say the smoke from the factory chimneys spoils the rye. It has changed the colour of the woods and made many people blind, so very likely it has stopped the corn growing. I shall give it up and go away perhaps, to America, or England. They say things are better over there."

I told him I was English. He inquired the fare to England, the wages of an agricultural labourer, and the chance to buy land. He seemed rather disconcerted at the cost of the railway journey. "It must be a long way off," said he.

After a while he stopped at a little shop and announced to the shopkeeper that I was an Englishman. A sorrowful little grocer came out and looked at me. "Can you write English?" he asked. I assented, so he brought me an envelope and asked me to address it to England. He handed me a slip of paper, on which was written in Russian characters: "Frezer, Gordon Gaus Shu Len," which I surmised might mean Mr. Frazer, Gordon House, Shoe Lane, London, E.C.

The old fellow explained that he wanted a famous cure for rheumatism, so I wrote that also on the envelope, just to spare Mr. Frazer trouble should such a person exist, and should he receive a letter in the envelope.

When we resumed our journey the peasant

showed a great admiration of the English nation. "The English discovered radium," said he; "they find it in the Ural now; they invented the flying machine. They have a great wheel on which people travel faster than on an electric tram, but it sticks sometimes, and then everyone who has a ticket receives fifty roubles. They have also a great statue round which sit four lions—I have seen it."

I looked at my acquaintance with amazement. "However did you learn all that? Have you an English friend?"

The peasant half-shut his eyes and enjoyed a triumph. "I subscribe to the *Universal Panorama*," he said at length. That explained all.

Turgoak is a fine, well-kept wooden village beside a great dark lake. The scenery is grander than at Ilmen, the peaks higher and blacker, and the pine woods more spacious. At the time I arrived there was a storm, and waves like the sea were rising in thousands of spiteful heads from the sullen water. On the sands fishermen were crouching under overturned boats, and they had lit fires to keep themselves warm; and peasant women who had been washing by the lake side were busy collecting garments from the bushes and banks where they had been drying. What was my astonishment to find at a sheltered corner of the shore some half-dozen bathing-coaches. I had indeed come to a fashionable place; the visitors required shelter whilst they dressed. I stayed at a beautifully kept *izba*, clean as a pin, and adorned with much fine embroidery. For hours in the room next to mine a peasant girl read from the Bible aloud, recited prayers, and prostrated herself before the ikons. She and the house in which she

lived were part of Holy Russia. Turgoak was worth visiting, if only for the wonderful stone church that dominates the wooden village; it is like the natural rock itself, and suggests the eternal. It has survived generations of men and numberless re-buildings of the cottages of the village, and it must go on into the far future when we and our children will all be in our graves.

Then I must not forget Turgoak has a post-office with a belfry, and a peasant is always sitting outside waiting to ring the half-hour and the hour.

From Turgoak I tramped through the pine-woods to Andreyevsky Factory, a very different village. Here I saw great companies of peasants—men, women, and children—washing out gold. Each party of workers numbered about twelve. One held the heavy iron filter into which the mud was flung, two or three others raked the mud, two others worked a little hose from a pond and played upon the mud, one gathered the gold globules as they came out on the stream of mud below, and one more watched that nothing was stolen. The remainder of the workers were busy with shovel and spade and barrow digging out the gravel at the place where search was being made, and then bringing it in wheelbarrows to the water edge.

At Andreyevsky I put up at a large cottage, the abode of a gold-mining family. Here the mother and her daughters were suffering from some affection of the eyes, brought on by the gases from the smelting works.

There were five children, and both mother and father bemoaned the fact that they had so many. "Some people have no children, some many," said

the woman. "God knows why. They say strange things nowadays. I wish we could have managed to be without them"—a most astonishing speech to hear in Russia, and from a peasant.

The father of the family was rather tipsy, but he made a great show of being hospitable. He offered me the one bed to sleep upon, sheepskin spread, but I preferred to sleep on the floor. I was much amused to see that all the females of the establishment slept on the bed, all in their petticoats, and without taking off their stockings. They looked very grimy and dirty, and went to bed with much giggling and chattering, and without saying their prayers before the ikon.

Next day mine host, very grey and sober, proposed to drive me twenty miles, and so earn three shillings. No, he wouldn't take any money for my board and lodging, but he would drive me a little way along the road for 1 rouble 50 copecks, money paid in advance. I agreed to go in his cart ten miles for one and sixpence, and he agreed with alacrity, received the money, and then made his wife drive me. I suppose when the woman got home again she found her husband drunk once more.

My road lay through forests, and they were bright with corn-flower and willow-herb. Numerous parties of women and children were out gathering berries, so I asked my driver why they weren't gold-washing. She explained to me that since on the day before most of the men had got drunk and were still sleeping, the village had resolved to go on strike for a day and gather berries. The village was *na pokhmelie*, getting sober, a definite function of the body politic on the Urals.

I stepped down at Soiman Factory, and here indeed I saw the origin of the talk about factory smoke. The air was filled with choking sulphurous fumes, and the whole forest side was withered. In one of the most beautiful valleys the great crowned shaft of a factory stood out menacing, dominant, and indifferent, like the Minotaur in Watts' picture, an immense, astonishing black shaft dividing the landscape beyond it as with a deep ink line, and lifting its thistle-shaped spout high into the zenith. The smoke rose from it in dense volumes, and overcast the sky from horizon to horizon.

The company, an English one, is engaged in developing the rich mineral ores of the district, and it has an immense output of platinum, gold, and copper. A private rail runs through its estate and connects Soiman with Kishtim, and along the narrow cutting come, puffing and panting all day, trains of quartz and sand, of shale and mud. I followed the cutting, and after about twenty miles' tramping gave up for the day—rain had set in. I found shelter in a great lumber room occupied by factory men and workers on the line.

It was a very gay evening with singing, talking, and card-playing. The men were not disposed to be hospitable at first—they advised me to seek a place elsewhere, about twenty of them slept in the one room as it was. Rather than walk another ten miles I chose to take my chance in the room. The result was that one bed was brought in for me and placed in the centre of the room: felt and sheepskins were spread on it. Everyone else slept on the floor. So when all were snoring, and I wakened at their chorus and looked round me, a queer sight presented itself.

I could imagine myself some sort of savage chief surrounded by my followers.

In the morning the talk turned on wages and the English management. I found the men were in receipt of the usual shilling a day, and they all thought it bad pay.

"Do you have any English workmen here?" I asked.

The Russians shook their heads.

"No English workman would come to take a shilling a day; it wouldn't be good enough."

I thought that since the firm was English, they would probably be paying the men more than they would otherwise get. But this was evidently not the case. The men waxed very humorous over the agents and manager of the firm, imitating a certain Mr. R——, who was always walking very fast and mopping his brow with a handkerchief—no Russian walks fast, or, indeed, walks at all if he can help it.

One workman began to talk of the strike on the Lena gold-washings;[1] the case was just the same as theirs—an English company who paid their men just the rate of wages prevalent in the country district when they started working.

"The men formed a union, just as we are forming, and they demanded a higher wage. 'We are digging out millions weekly,' said they, 'and you are giving us barely enough to get drunk on.' The English company said, 'We've had enough of strikes in other concerns; we are not going to have any nonsense here. This is not England, it is not even Russia, it is Siberia—and what are you? Convicts, sons of convicts, nothing more; dogs, not men. No! You

[1] The great Lena scandal of April 1912.

work for what you get, and do it quickly, or else . . .' Or else they would set the soldiers on them. You know the story. The factory had a guard of gendarmes to prevent looting and keep order; the captain of the gendarmes was ready to do the dirty work and teach the men an example. He gave the order to fire. It happened just as at St. Petersburg on Black Sunday; the workmen came in a procession with a petition for better wages, better houses, better hours. The manager of the factory skulked in the background, whilst the captain ranged his men in a line and prepared to commit the crime. The captain cried out to the men that they were forbidden to move beyond a certain gate; the workmen paid no attention, and the consequence was the captain called on his men to fire. They sent volley after volley into the peaceful crowd of workmen, and four hundred of them fell, dead or wounded. That is your English company. But, of course, they had made a mistake: the news soon found its way to Russia. It appeared in all the papers, and made even 'black-hundreders' indignant. Who was this captain? What was this English company? We held sympathetic strikes. We gained over to our side, we labour Socialists, many who up to then had been only lukewarm. Oh, the company lost; all companies lost by it. And they failed to work their mine at the old rate of wages even then, and have had to pay for doctors and coffins and widows and Government reports, and for arresting the captain and conveying him. Nobody will wash gold for them; the Devil has them."

"Do you mean that another affair like that at Lena might happen here?" I inquired.

"No, no, our English won't use force, especially

after the other. The papers said too much about them this summer. But we shall strike, and often. It is a pity we have so many poor people always migrating here. It prevents us from combining, but we shall arrange."

"In England there are men getting five times the money you are and still striking," I told him.

"*Molotsi*—fine fellows!" ejaculated the workman, with an enthusiasm untroubled by economic doubts.

I wonder if when the revolutionary force begins to manifest itself again it will start by a strike, not a demonstration, but a real strike, and be led forward by infuriated mobs of workmen. If it does, and if it succeeds, it will be achieved with greater bloodshed and barbarity than was the French Revolution itself. At the moment of writing, the Lena catastrophe is being considered by a commission, and the captain of gendarmerie is under arrest, but in the interests of the Tsar the matter should be dealt with swiftly, and exemplary punishment should be meted out. For the matter of that, the whole gold-mining industry should be considered. Every peasant lost to the land is lost to the Church, and lost to the Tsar if he becomes a gold miner. Evil commercial conditions in this era of swift conception of ideas may easily ruin all that Russians prize. Evil industrial conditions make more impression on the mind of the common man than condemnations of revolutionaries, oppression of the Jews, of the Finns, or the Poles. It is not worth the Tsar's while to allow the peasants to be exploited wholesale at his expense.

. . . . . .

I reached Kishtim Factory that day seated on the last truck of a mining train. It rained continuously,

so that the alluvial gravel on which we rested our feet was turned almost to mud—a dismal experience it was, whizzing through the soaked forest under the grey sky and slanting rain.

Kishtim Factory is an immense unorganised village like Miass. It has 35,000 inhabitants, no public works, pavements, drains, no schools to speak of, or library or debating society, no theatre other than the electric, no means of culture, no diversion but drink. The population work hard at the works, and for the most part find their interest in life in "love" making and conviviality.

VI

ELECTING THE FOURTH DUMA

MIASS is in the electoral division of Troitsk, and during the whole of the summer of 1912 the Russian General Election was proceeding. No one would have thought it from the political atmosphere of Miass. There were no posters, voting cards, public meetings, or private canvasses. Indeed, I am assured not two people in the whole population exercised their right of suffrage. No one would take the trouble to make the two-hundred-mile journey to choose between a score of strangers for a representative. Miass will only become alive electorally when it has an electric tram to its railway station and cheap polling-day excursions to its electoral centre, or when a Socialist candidate sends motor cars for the people, or when Miass becomes a town and has a member for itself and district. As it is, its population would almost unanimously vote for the "left" candidate, the Radical. But it is outside the contest altogether. What is true of Miass is true also of Kishtim and hundreds of other villages on the Urals—all these gold-mining centres are undeveloped Socialist power. They will be brought in later, and will swell the red tide which must rise in Russia as it has done in Germany.

But the Russian General Election is a very complicated matter and is cleverly contrived. First tens

of thousands of candidates are nominated, and half of them are objected to and disqualified as not fit persons. Imagine an English General Election conducted on the same lines. King George would have the power of disqualifying any candidate of whom he disapproved or who was likely to be troublesome. If King George had a strong Conservative tendency he could so arrange that the people of such Radical places as Northampton and Walthamstow should have for choice of candidates a true-blue line such as—

Lord Hugh Cecil,
Mr. Bonar Law,
Sir Frederick Banbury.

What a raving revolutionary would do when confronted with such a choice it is hard to say, unless it is that he would go and manufacture a bomb.

Nevertheless the establishment of the Duma was undoubtedly a very important event in the battle of Western ideas *versus* the Autocracy and the Church. The task of keeping the Duma blue must be increasingly difficult as the years go on, and the way by which it may have to be kept blue will be a very bad advertisement of the Tsar. In ten or twenty years illiterate Russia will be half-educated Russia, and the difficulty will be to find conservative people at all. As soon as a peasant learns to read he begins to want new things from life; he sees that he is poor, as Adam saw that he was naked; he begins to compare himself with his kind in other countries; he finds the ready-made creed of the Socialist, and swallows it whole. In the days when these new Russians all get to know one another the realm will sway, rocked by

the enthusiasm of thousands who are in the new-born joy of a first and foolish thought.

Now the fourth Duma is elected, and despite a prolific spending of spiritual capital on the part of the Church, there is evident a distinct leftward movement. Eighteen extra seats were gained by the Progressive and Socialist parties. I append the table of the result:—

	Party.	Elected.	State of Parties at Dissolution.	Increase or Decrease.
Left.	Social Democrats	15	13	+2
	Labour	14	11	+3
	Kadets	54	52	+2
	Progressives	59	46	+13
	Popular Democrats	18	16	−2
Right.	Octabrists	75	132	−57
	Nationalists	71	93	−22
	Right	128	52	+76
	Independent	8	22	−14

It will be seen that the Church party (the Rights) scored simply at the expense of their brothers the Octabrists, and did not alienate any of the Radical voters. The Octabrists are a party named after the month October, in which a constitution was granted. They might be called Constitutionalists, and they are for the most part moderate Conservatives, though there is a sprinkling of what we might call Whigs or landed Liberals.

The result, though a most significant one, was taken very calmly, the upholders of the autocracy feeling calm, the revolutionists mocking. European attention was absorbed by the war on the Balkans, and the whole troublous matter passed off extremely quietly.

Yet the result was really an astonishing one. Despite the fact that the priesthood entered the lists on the one hand, and that on the other there was an organised boycott of the election, yet the Left moved forward by 18 points. It is a slow movement like that of a glacier, yet it is evidently a real one, brought about by some force like that of gravity—something which cannot in the long run be frustrated.

I was chatting with the manager of Miass Bank about the election. He called himself a Bebelian evolutionist, and held that money and not votes guided the destiny of nations. In a hundred years all Europe would be Socialist, and Russia with it, owing to the influence of the banks. Hence he never voted for anyone. "Bank notes are the best voting papers," said he, "and according to the person you give them to, so you vote for the control of the future"—an ingenious refuge of the intellect. There seemed, however, to be some truth in the idea; it also suggested a hidden power like that of gravity. It seems that Russia is definitely committed to our Western type of democracy by the institution of the Duma, and that sooner or later the people will dispower the Tsar and give the reins of management to a cabinet or a president.

VII

GOOD-BYE TO THE LAKE

FROM the forest one day I brought a glorious brown-haired caterpillar, 6 inches long, having a black velvet band at the join of each of its segments, and consequently looking very splendid as it walked—the larva of the Fox Moth. Ivan Ivanitch exclaimed—"Well, there's a healthy one—*nuzhno spirtovat:* you ought to preserve it in spirit as a curiosity." I told him I preferred to keep my caterpillars alive, and watch them change to chrysalises and then to moths, and I showed him the little pets which I kept on a diminutive forest in a mosquito-net cage. My host could not believe that caterpillars changed to moths, so I took a chrysalis and showed him the wing cases formed on the shell. After that, whenever Ivan Ivanitch had friends, he sent to me for a chrysalis to show them; and when the fox caterpillar made a great strong egg-shaped cocoon quite a sensation was caused.

So before I left the Ural my host came to me, and said, "I'm an uneducated man, but I want to know everything. What is the name of this science. I shall write to Moscow for a book on it, and next year find myself some caterpillars and watch them." I replied that it was *Entomologgia, E-n-t-o-m-o-l-o-gg-i-a.* "Write it down, please," said he; "I shall write to Seetin's shop in Moscow, and ask for it." So I

wrote it. My host's interest was very child-like and touching.

I left the Ural at the end of the summer when the frosts began to make the nights too cold, and went south again. But I was loth to leave the lake. All manner of dainty things happened by its side. At Bartholomew tide, for instance, sweet-scented violets appeared, as they are supposed to do, for a few days, and then disappeared. I picked several, and wore them. In the woods were living bouquets of the Michaelmas daisy, St. Ursula's flower. From the pines, the needles sifted down on to the thousands and myriads of cones which you crunched underfoot as you walked. The lake mirrored the clouds all noon, but in the evening, when the floating grasses gleamed and the brown reeds seemed grouped for effect, it was like a great wide pastel painting.

How different it is to live by the side of a lake from living by the side of the sea. The lake is a lovable human thing, but the sea seems greater than we. The lake is quite mortal—it is a mirroring of our own lives. It is bounded, it has little storms and vexations, it has days of placid happiness, unclouded mornings of rippling and sparkling like a child laughing, misty evenings and long melancholies. It has a soul; and that soul is the lady of the lake who in the dark mysterious night stretches out a queenly arm and brandishes a sword.

In the winter the lake is frozen down to the depths, and it wears a mantle of snow; sledges with bells fly merrily over it, for the winter road to Miass takes its course right across it. I should like to see Miass then, and shall come again some day.

IN THE CRIMEA

IN THE CRIMEA

I

FROM the white-stone beautiful town of Sevastopol, built up and down its many steep and sudden hills, I walked to the village of Balaklava. It was about Christmas time—actually Christmas in England, though not Christmas in the Crimea for a week or so. Russia was in the grip of forty degrees of frost; but the Crimea was mild and gentle as a soft English April. For though fifty years ago the soldiers died in the trenches from exposure, it is not always winter on the Black Sea shore even when winter is due to be her worst. The Crimea is Russia's sanctuary against cold.

I left the wide blue harbour with all its batteries and stone defences; passed through the clean bright town full of grey-bearded army officers and retired admirals; walked slowly along the verge of the cliff which threatens the inmost haven, the dark green gulf with its dozen old grey-blue warships all far down below me; watched the marines being drilled on sandy platforms at the water's edge, and listened to the occasional calls of the buglers on the ships. It was a pleasant misty morning, mild, though the sun had not conquered the mists. The road to Balaklava was delightful on this quiet Sunday when I set out upon it. At ten it was warm, and the sun shone all the morning. The road made by the English troops was dry and sandy, and undulated

pleasantly through a cleft in the great plateau which Nature seemed to have designed for it. Gigantic green cliffs, variegated in colour by white rocks jutting out, arose on each side. In hollows in the rocks, below protruding ledges and in shallow caves, the Crimean peasants have built dwelling-places, making use of the ledges and natural holes. High above the road, old women and children were walking about looking like dolls; there were lines of clothes drying; geese were cackling; and dogs were scampering round the pigs and the turkeys. The air had a delightful odour of peat-land and moor-land. In the sere leafless bushes down among the mosses and the timid verdure, shy violets were peeping, and Jacob's ladder, periwinkle—little glints of colour that were very precious.

As the road issued out of the defile, I came to a land of many folded hills, ridges, and plateaux, brown and green to the indistinct horizon. A place where the air had trembled with the cannon while thousands and thousands of red-coats marched to dreadful battle. Now it was clothed in the most utter peace. In the distance gleamed white monuments and obelisks over graves, and they held the landscape sacred to the dead.

I walked over the moor. The spiny teasles were all brown; the rank grass was browned by the breath of winter. Here and there in the dampness were smirched dandelions. The cloudless blue sky was hazy, and seemed to stand only a little way above the tableland. There was a pleasant sound of running waters and a murmur of the sea.

A young clouded-yellow butterfly crossed my path. I caught him with my hand, delicately, not to hurt him, and I looked at his bright green eyes and peach-

YALTA

coloured legs and asked him, "Are you of this year or the next, my friend?" He answered mysteriously, "I am born out of my own day and generation, and am bound to be misunderstood." After that he relapsed into silence and would say no more. He clung to my warm forefinger and did not fly away. So I carried him a mile that way, and then transferred him to a dewy violet, trusting he would find it satisfactory.

At mid-day I lit a fire and made my dinner, sitting on a rock by the side of one of the mounds of the battlefield. Gradually as I watched the sky the bank of mist which had been obscuring Sevastopol and the sea began to have influence even in the zenith. Winter chills crept through the warmth of the sun; mists rose out of the moor about me, and from far away on all horizons vapours came over to visit them. In less than half an hour I was enveloped in fog. Late in the evening I strayed into the Greek village of Kalon, a great centre of the war, and found hospitality in a pleasant family where the old grandmother had been a little girl in the days of the war, and for whom the coming and going of the military, the shrieking of the shells in the air, the terrific concussions of the cannon, the snapping of the guns, the prancing of the horses, the bringing in of the dead and the dying, were episodes of her own childhood. She compared the English, French, and Italian soldiers, and preferred the English, showed me bits of old uniforms and flags, regimental numbers on metal, bullets, great rusty cannon balls, and even white bones of the dead, collected by her sons during a lifetime of tilling the soil.

Next day I ascertained the position of the English

graveyard, and determined to visit it. I may say my chief idea in going through the Crimea was a desire to see the place where so many English soldiers were buried, far from their homes. I pictured a strange deserted acre high on the hills, wet, mossy, dewy, overgrown with grasses and chance flowers, with perhaps in the mild December, a violet showing. It seemed the dead must be solitary in a land of strangers where the living were all of different family and race. No one of my house was buried there, but I would go to them, and pause and dream over them a little.

II

How often is the surface of truth different from the dream!

"Heer Mateelda!"

I had presented myself at the ponderous locked gates of the English cemetery. Four dogs on chains were nearly strangling themselves to get at me and bite me, and from the depths of a garden attached to a lodge a man's plaintive voice called in a language which might conceivably have been English, but which certainly came from lips that were not English.

"An English-speaking Russian in charge," I thought. But no. Herr Kremer was a German, and didn't speak English at all. A rather garish start to find the dead shut in a great prison whose gaoler was a German! Yes, a German, an estimable man, and a lover of flowers, but a German.

The cemetery is indeed high up on the moors, wind-blown and rain-washed. But it is walled round, cared for, and kept. It is in a wonderfully solitary

country, wide and grey and empty, within hearing of the sea when the waves are high, between Sevastopol and Balaklava. I had passed it on the day before, unknowingly, and this day I returned upon my steps to visit it.

It was with strange emotion that I walked from tomb to tomb and read the inscriptions on the stones, all the English words, so unfamiliar in a foreign land, all the English names so unexpected and so pleasing. Every inscription seemed to be a little story not quite told—all that was said by someone inarticulate. Of course there was no poetry, no hymns, on any stones. All was terse, subdued, with a military sternness. Thus —" Lieut. H. Tryon killed in action," " Thomas Leigh Goldie, who fell at Inkerman," " Daniel Mahoney of the 62nd Band, who fell a victim to fever," " John Goodall, drowned in *The Prince*," " Andrew Wilson, who perished in a snowstorm 6th January 1855," " Five young men who died of cholera," " Private John Curty who died from his wounds received at the Redan," " Sacred to the memory of the non-commissioned officers, gunners, and drivers of the night siege train Royal Artillery." There were records of those who died of dysentery, of wounds, killed in the trenches, killed by shells, killed in night-sallies, in stormings and in retreats, in general actions, on sentry. How many episodes of the war, accidents, glorious shames, were thus suggested to the mind, how many ways of death in war were represented!

Many chrysanthemums were in bloom, and little sunflowers, crocuses, and snowdrops were showing in the rich black mould. Some stones were mossy and lichen-covered, with the inscriptions effaced. But others were grand and well cared for as if but recently

erected. I think I looked at every stone, and read every word that could be made out. I saw the wee stone stuck in at an angle, all fallen to the weather, telling that John Ross is buried there, and not so far away the handsome, well-chiselled monument that tells in no uncertain voice of John Baillie Rose. How strange to try and fancy how that gallant gentleman looked in his day!

JOHN BAILLIE ROSE, Esq.,
OF KILRAVOCK CASTLE,
NAIRNSHIRE, SCOTLAND,
WHO DIED WHILST GALLANTLY LEADING THE LIGHT
COMPANY OF HIS REGIMENT TO THE ATTACK
OF THE HEIGHTS OF THE ALMA,
20TH SEPTEMBER 1854.
Brave among the brave.

How pathetically irrelevant seem the day and the month, now that time is swallowing up our memories, and the new generations arise who know no lore of the Crimea. In the young men and women of to-day the South African war puts the Crimean out of sight. And the Fifties are very far away. In those days the Napoleonic struggle had still a personal memory with many people. Thus I read at the grave of Sir George Cathcart, that he had been *aide-de-camp* to the Duke of Wellington at Waterloo, and had served with the Russian Army in 1813 and 1814. He was killed at Inkerman in 1854, and was only sixty after all.

Herr Kremer came down one of the graveyard paths and began to show me the graves.

"Under that stone," said he, pointing to a granite mausoleum over the bodies of the Royal Engineers, "under that stone lie four hundred souls." He spoke in broken Russian all the while.

"How many lie buried here altogether?" I asked.

"They say there died fifty thousand British in the Crimea," he replied, "but no one knows for certain. They were not buried here at first, but were removed afterwards from various burial grounds on the moor. Thousands of bodies lie outside still in forgotten places, unmarked. But we have gathered all the memorials we could find. All the stones have been brought in, many bones and skulls, many bits of uniform and old weapons, cannon balls and so forth. You will come and see them. They are indoors. A pity you have come at mid-winter; it is lovely here in June. The whole cemetery is one mass of flowers. Every day we have hundreds of visitors from Sevastopol, it is a place where promenaders and lovers come. The flowers are a sight. We have thirty-five different varieties of oleander. . . ."

"Ah," said I, "that is interesting. They are all Russians who come, I suppose."

"All Russians."

"And British?"

"Oh, British come sometimes also. Once there used to be hundreds every year, but now no more than five or six, and soon, I suppose, none will come at all, or perhaps an occasional one. It used to be a regular excursion in the years after the war, and many came. But gradually the numbers dropped off. There used to be twenty or thirty each year, but in the last ten years even that number has melted away."

I went in and looked over the memorials, and

added my name to the dwindling list of British visitors. It was even true, as he said, our countrymen were ceasing to come. I suppose they will only come again when they come to see the Crimea, and then they will be rather surprised that they had overlooked the fact that so many of our dead are there.

Yes, it was all very different from my imagining . . . thirty-five species of oleander, a promenade ground of Russian lads and lasses, a collection of stones, a high-walled Bastille, and a Russian-speaking German keeping it. The history of the dead is usually tedious, but these on the Crimean moors still have some sort of an adventure. I left the cemetery for the moor once more, and I walked over the path almost to Balaklava.

Evening came whilst I was still on the way. I was in a country that reminded me of the view of the Welsh border from Church Stretton. Above me and beyond were many folded misty hills, and down below were meadows, the white dots of villages, streaks of a white highway, evening smoke from cottage chimneys, distant cattle, a white obelisk here, an old wooden cross there. There was a pleasant noise of the wheels of carts rattling homeward, and of the calling of crows. In front of me the way was green, but in advance the hills were rusty and purple. The sun, in floods of golden vapour, set into the long ridge of grey-blue cloud that had hung over the sea all day. The vast chamber of my vision was filled with a twilight which was the spirit of silence.

To how many of those who died, such scenes and such skies were the last of this world? Did they know that silence, or was there always the accompaniment of terror, the shell tearing through the air,

the roar of the cannon, the blazing farmhouse, the far leaguer, the galloping scouts, bugle calls?

When night came, the dead seemed to have an empire denied them in the day. The whole moor stirred with shadows and fantastic shapes. In the air were sobs and lispings, whispers, memories. "They have gathered the stones," I whispered, "but where are the bones?" I thought of the young soldier whose lot it had been to die so foolishly and irrelevantly, not for his native land but for Turkey, not for the Christian but for the Moslem, fighting against the simple and the brave of Holy Russia. Such a foolish war! Yet such a memorable and picturesque campaign! I repeated to myself the soldiers' songs of Campbell. There is no tenderer poetry of war than his. I thought of the "Charge of the Light Brigade," such a journalistic poem by comparison. The Light Brigade incident was like the rest of the war—a blunder, a shameful blunder, and the style of poetry most suitable to it had been a hymn. For my part I can never forget that those who were the enemy were simple mouzhiks who believed they were fighting for Christ against those who persecuted the pilgrims to Jerusalem.

I sat down by a white stone that marked a grave, and watched the evening darken. Then, as the stars came out, I found myself repeating mechanically,—

"Our bugles sang truce, for the night-cloud had lowered,
And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky;
And thousands had sunk on the ground overpowered,
The weary to sleep and the wounded to die.

Whilst reposing that night on my pallet of straw,
By the wolf-scaring faggot that guarded the slain,
In the dead of the night a sweet vision I saw,
And thrice ere the morning I dreamed it again."

And then the story of that vision of his own country, the mountain goats bleating aloft, the sweet strain that the corn-reapers sang, the cottage where the woman who loved him waited and dreaded, the bed where his little ones lay warm, and then the cry from them,—

> "'Stay, stay with us yet, thou art weary and worn,'
> And fain was the war-broken soldier to stay."

It seemed to me the soldier who had that sweet vision was a doomed one. He was killed next day in action or perhaps next night in the darkness:

> "Few, few shall part where many meet,
> The snow shall be their winding sheet,
> And every turf beneath their feet
> Shall be a soldier's sepulchre."

What tenderness Campbell breathed into that word "soldier"! He loved and understood the soldier—the soldier of a simpler age, not the foul-mouthed bully of the pages of Kipling, and he loved him. I said to myself as I trod from turf to turf in the dark night down to Balaklava, "When you say that line, 'Shall be a soldier's sepulchre,' remember, my friend, that the soldier meant is the same who, at the dead of the night, had a sweet vision, and thrice ere the morning did dream it again."

III

A foolish war, and yet, nowadays, many would be ready to enter another, almost as foolish. If Russia made another serious bid to take Constantinople, we should oppose her again; Liberals and Conservatives would agree, the one in defending a weak nation,

THE CRIMEAN COAST

the other to conserve some imaginary balance of power.

But the time has changed. Russia has become a weak nation, and our friend. Russia, thwarted in the South, has turned to the East, only to be stopped as effectually there. Russia has been considered, even by Sir Edward Grey himself, to be too weak. Will not the question be asked in the near future—Would Russia be too much strengthened by the acquisition of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles? Would she not perhaps be a better and a stronger friend? Would not her foreign and imperial policy become more calm, more comprehensible thereby, less dangerous to the peace of Europe. If poor Turkey is going to split up, it is better that she should be the natural issue of Russia than the spoil of Italy or Austria. In spite of all the suspicion we have about Russia's intentions, it seems to me that in the event of a partition of Turkey, our Government would to-day find itself obliged to back up Russia. Thwarting Russian policy in Turkey during the last fifty years caused the present trouble in Persia, and our fears about the Indian frontier caused the Japanese War, and the consequent revolutionary outbreak, and has been the inspiration of Russia's unscrupulous and subtle international policy. If the throne of the Sultan is going into the sea, it would be perhaps well to save it for the Tsars; it would clear the air in Europe, and functionise Russia in Europe freely and fitly.

Russia is our friend, but she is rather inclined to disbelieve in the sincerity of our friendship, as we for our part disbelieve in the sincerity of hers. She would easily desert us, just as we would easily desert

her—officially, that is; for there is a real and lasting attraction drawing the two peoples to one another. The present state of the British Foreign Office ought to be remedied. From the Liberal point of view it seems as if a Minister were dictating the policy of England entirely on his own account. There is an appalling amount of slander and gossip going about all the time. Even if Russia is the true enemy of Liberals, it is very unfair to Russia to confuse the message that we send to her. If the Liberal party really disapprove of Sir Edward Grey, they ought to obtain another Minister and another policy. If they do approve of him, then they should make it quite clear that those who attack his policy are only a minority. Probably the difficulty is in finding a new policy other than that of "splendid isolation." In any case the air ought to be cleared, and the Foreign Minister ought to feel freer. He would then be bolder and less secretive. England could treat with Russia with our own national frankness and honesty which as yet, I am afraid, we have not shown in the business. Russia needs to feel this clear personality at the other end. She needs to know that if necessary we would fight her, friend as she is, but that we are honestly ready to help her to fulfil her destiny.

For our part we need to see Russia and her multiplex domestic problems more clearly, not through the smoke of factories or the coloured glass of political prejudice. The Russian nation is to-day at an extraordinarily important point in its history; its destiny is being wrought hour by hour. It is a question whether the Russians are simply to be used by capitalists as are the virgin forests—for fuel for their machines; whether the town and the land are to be

given over to barbarism, and exploited and ruined commercially; or whether a great nation is going to emerge—a nation functionised in a State, a Church, a literature, and a traditional national life. I am sure it is the latter we British wish for them. We all wish the nation well.

POSTSCRIPT

THE BALKAN WAR

SINCE writing this book, the war in the Balkans has drawn almost to a close, and the Slavs find themselves unexpectedly victorious and conspicuous. The victory has been a racial and religious one. It is a triumph of the Slavonic people, but also of the Orthodox Church. Even Russia, so lately humiliated by Japan, is aflush with the joy and pride of conquest.

The victory of the allies is more important to Russia than a victory of Russian arms could have been. For the eyes of the whole nation are turned once more southward. The march towards the East was wrong in instinct—a perversion caused by the interference of Western Europe in Russia's early attempts to develop her empire through Turkey. All that Russia cares for lies in her own longitude, southward and northward, but not eastward or westward. Russia is neither the most western of the easterns nor the most eastern of the westerns. She lies neutrally between Asia and Europe, and is a continent in herself.

Although Turkey possibly retains Constantinople, that city is the natural capital of the Slavonic Empire both geographically and by ecclesiastical heritage. It is rash to prophesy, but it seems almost the predestined capital. Russia will probably enter into

alliance or federation with the Balkan States, Roumania will be suppressed or persuaded into it, and the whole great Slavonic race will be functionised on the Mediterranean. It is an old dream. A year ago it would have been thought a foolish one; but to-day it seems to be realising itself in actual shape and form.

Whilst in London in December, I met at the house of Madame Olga Novikof many of the representatives of the Balkan States, the peace delegates sent to St. James's Conference, and it was surprising and charming to see their devotion and loyalty to the brilliant and famous "lady of Claridge's"—the greatest lover of Russia and lover of England in one that the mutual attraction of two nations has yet produced. We all spoke Russian, we sang the Russian National Anthem, prayed for the Emperor, crossed ourselves to the same ikons in the Eastern corner of Madame Novikof's rooms—behaved, indeed, like the enthusiastic and patriotic representatives of one race rather than of many peoples.

The Turk was first and foremost the enemy of the Church, the standing insult to Eastern Christianity, the persecutor of wandering Slavonic pilgrims, the murderer of Christian colonists. He prevented the greatness of the Eastern Church. Now that he is out of the way, the most wonderful things are going to happen in the world of Eastern Orthodoxy. The first of these events is the recognition of the independence of Mount Athos as an ecclesiastical republic, and consequently the insured safety of the thousands of Slavonic and Greek pilgrims who visit the shrines of that strange peninsula, which is dedicated first to the Virgin Mary, and second to a whole series of wonderful old hermits and antique mediæval saints.

The conquest of the Sepulchre is almost bound to follow: more than nine-tenths of the population of Palestine are ready to throw over Moslem rule. Then, undoubtedly, whatever the final conditions of peace may be, the Orthodox Church will gain new privileges at Constantinople. Should the latter city become internationalised, it will gain a Christian security. In any case, it is unlikely that the Turks can hold their present capital for long as a Mahomedan city. Great events are toward in the history of Russia and of Europe.

INDEX

ABKHASIANS, 130, 143 *seq.*, 189, 196
Adam's flannel, 46
Adler, 91, 93–4
Advertisement, 25, 172
Agricultural machinery, 25 *seq.*
Alexander II, 229
Allies, the Balkan, 4, 283, 302 *seq.*
Aloopka, 108, 190
Anarchism, 23, 62
Andreef, 101, 121, 124, 218
Andreyevsky Factory, 274
Antichrist, 133
Apples, 56
Archangel, 250
Archipof-Osipovka, 55
Architecture, 27, 274
Armavir, 61
Armenians, 5
Artsibashef, 121
Asiatic frontier, 252
Athleticism in Russia, 44
Athos, Mt., 132, 303
— New, 81, 124, 158
Aubergines, 53
Aviation, 99 *seq.*, 249

BAKU, 9, 71
Balaklava, 190, 289
Balkan War, 283, 302 *seq.*
Balmont, 128, 171
Banbury, Sir F., 282
Bartholomew-tide, 286
Bathing, 43–4, 166, 273
Batum, 206 *seq.*
Bazaars, 47, 267
Bazarof, 116
Beardsley, Aubrey, 227
Beggars, 242
"Be Kind," gospel of, 231
Belgian companies, 29
Berard, 263
Berries, 256–7, 275
Biely, 172
Bilberries, 256
Birches, 252, 255
Black River, 150
— Sea Railway, 9, 13, 61, 71, 140
Blok, 128, 171
Booblik, 19 *seq.*
Boots, 195
Bora, 49–50
Bosphorus, 299
Bourgeois, 116 *seq.*, 213
Bribery, 41, 244–5
British capital, 8–9, 178, 222, 276
— cemetery in the Crimea, 292
Burnet moths, 46
Butcher's broom, 47

CADETS, 283
Camberwell Beauty, 255
Campbell, 297–8
Canterbury bells, 46, 255
Capitalism, 62 *seq.*
Caran d'Ache, 93
Card-playing, 28, 46, 105, 276
Carmen, 106
Carruthers-Gould, 102
Caspian, 26
Cathcart, Sir George, 294
Catholicism, 133
Caucasus, 26, 59, 113, 139, 144, 181, 195, 197
— compared with India, 139
— compared with Urals, 140
Cecil, Lord Hugh, 282
Cement, 38
Censor, 121
Chaucer, 265
Chekhof, 28, 125, 174, 227
Chelyaba, 252
Cherkesses, 60, 83
Chesterton, G. K., 101, 127
Chilies, 53
Christ, Second Coming of, 133, 174
Churchill, 237

Collectivism, 62
Colonists, 54 *seq.*, 60, 65 *seq.*, 78, 87, 94, 189, 290
Commerce, 4, 24, 59, 71, 178, 222, 276
Conference, St. James's, 303
Conservatism, 62 *seq.*, 282
Constantinople, 298, 302, 304
Constitutionalists, 283
Crab-apple jam, 54
Crimea, 190, 289
Crimean War, 289, 291
Curlew, 252
Curty, Pte. John, 293

DAGOMISE, 84
Daily Chronicle, 21
Daily News, 6, 21, 64
Dancing, 119
D'Annunzio, 264
Dardanelles, 299
Datchas, 39, 42, 124, 169
Development, lack of, 59
Dice, 45
Dionéo, 171
Doctors, 28, 41
Don, the, 25-6
Dooshetchka, 227
Dorian Grey, 127
Dostoievsky, 28, 106, 124, 174, 269
Dots and dottiness, 99-101
Drains, 45, 88, 189
Drand, 181
Dresses, 44
Dubasof, 156
Duma, 281, 282
Dwina, 263
Dzhugba, 57

ECLECTICISM, 171
Ekaterinburg, 271
Electric theatres, 27-8, 92, 106, 120, 268
Embroidery, 211, 273
Engineers, 28, 208
English and Russian Churches, proposed union, 6
English life, imitation of, 29, 120
Entente cordiale, the, 8-10, 179
Entomology, 285
Ermolof, 203

FACTORIES, 266, 272
Fairy tales, 264
Famine, 238, 271
Fété, 227
Fevers, 41, 62, 75, 88
Finland, 63, 250
Fishing, 257
Flowers, 46 *seq.*
Foma Gordyeef, 35, 125
Forsytes, 122
Fourth Duma, 281
Fox moth, 285
Free libraries, 26, 43, 209
Freemasons, 135
Fritillary butterfly, 258
Fruit, 39, 47, 57, 61, 80

GAGRI, 41, 112 *seq.*, 130, 190
Galsworthy, John, 35, 121, 127
Gelendzhik, 41 *seq.*, 71, 190
George V, King, 282
Georgians, 189, 196
Germany, 3, 5, 102, 134, 260, 281
Gold, 8, 59, 264, 276
— mining, 265, 281
— washing, 259, 274
Golden Fleece, The, 170
Golden rod, 46
Goldie, Thomas Leigh, 293
Goodall, John, 293
Gordyeef, Foma, by Gorky, 35, 125
Gorky, 101, 124, 125, 126, 237
Gramophones, 106, 120
Grass of Parnassus, 255
Great Britain and Russia, 10, 300
Greek colonists, 54, 57, 70-1, 87, 94 *seq.*, 189, 291
Grey, Sir Edward, 299, 300
Gudaöut, 190

HARES, 237 *seq.*, 243, 248
Health resorts, 41 *seq.*, 71, 87 *seq.*, 113 *seq.*, 190, 273
Henleyism, 99
Hermits, 264
Hollyhocks, 47
Holy Russia, 274, 297
Honeysuckle, 47
Hospitality, 199, 232, 275
Housekeeping, 42, 119, 256

IKONS, 160, 212, 242, 273
Ilmen, 252, 254
Imperialism, 62 *seq.*, 140 *seq.*

Industrialism, 11, 24, 137, 140, 178, 202, 221, 267
Infant mortality, 270
Injured and Insulted, 241
Inkerman, 294
Inns, 191 *seq.*, 266
Intelligentia, 67, 103, 116 *seq.*, 166, 168, 225 *seq.*, 230
Ivanof, Viacheslaf, 171

JACOBS, W. W., 126
Jason, 202
Jerome, J. K., 127
Jerusalem, 297
Jews, 134, 245 *seq.*, 279
Jungle, The, 10, 35
Justinian, 138

KABARDINKA, 39
Kalon, 291
Kaminetz, 242
Kapli Krovi, 218
Karamazof, 116
Ketsekhur Hills, 50
Khost, 93
Kidnapped, 99
Kief, 128, 243
Kipling, 127, 132, 169, 298
Kirghiz, 250
Kishtim Factory, 271, 280, 281
Kokoftsef, 27
Korolenko, 170
Kouprine, 103, 116
Kreutzer Sonata, 118
Krishna-murti, 174

LABOUR Party, 283
Lady of Claridge's, 303
Land, speculation in, 61, 71, 189, 208
Last Judgment, 133
Lawyers, 28
Lazarevsky, 80
Lena gold-field scandal, 7–8, 277 *seq.*
Lermontof, 106
Les Forces tumultueuses, 177
Liberal Imperialism, 63
— Unionism, 63
Liberalism, 62 *seq.*, 65, 122
Liberals, 283
Life of Man, 218
London Jack, 127
Loosha, 215 *seq.*, 225 *seq.*

MACHINERY, 25, 260
Maeterlinck, 150
Mahoney, Daniel, 293
Maikop, 41, 61, 71
Mail, 64
Maize, 53
Makhorka, 240
Malaria, 41, 62, 87, 112, 181, 191 *seq.*
Maleçka, 6
Malthusianism, 274
Malverns, 263
Mamison Pass, 146
Man and Superman, 118
Marbled white butterfly, 46
Marianna, 116
Massacres, 242
Massingham, H. W., 170
Medea, 202
Melons, 53
Merezhkovsky, 221
Metchnikof, 89
Miass, 266, 280
Michael Pass, 51
Middle classes, 28
Mingrelians, 130, 182, 189, 196
Miracles, 160
Mithridates, 112
Moldavians, 94
Molokans, 52
Monasteries, 159, 161, 181
Mongolia, 63
Morning Leader, 64
Moscow, 9, 89, 99, 102, 207
Mud-baths, 44
Municipal works, 26, 45, 71, 88 *seq.*
Mushrooms, 279
Music-halls, 26, 221
Mysteries, 160
Mzintz River, 94

NAKHITCHEVAN, 17
Nation, The, 170
Nationalists, 283
Nedugskuya, 70
Nesterof, 128
New Athos, 81, 124, 158
Nezhdanof, 116
Nietzsche, 122, 128, 150, 173
Nikolaef, 9, 89, 207
Niva, 106
Northerners, 250
Novikof, Mme. Olga, 7, 303
Novocherkask, 24
Novorossisk, 37–9, 60, 183, 238

OCTABRISTS, 283
Officials, 156, 240
Oil, 8, 71, 206
Oleographs, 154–5
Olginka, 57–8, 70
Orthodox Church, the, 12–13, 159, 162, 210, 212, 223, 279, 302, 304
Osnova Zhizni, 217
Otchegor, 195
Otchemchiri, 130, 181, 188

PASSPORTS, 144, 198
Peace delegates, 303
Peasantry, 60, 122, 239, 260 *seq.*, 265
Peer Gynt, 216
Penza, 248
Pereplotchikof, 128, 172
Perm, 250
Persia, 4, 63
Pervinka, 94
"Peter the Painter," 7
Petrof, 124, 217
Picnics, 44
Pilenki, 122
Pilgrimages, 51–2, 80, 162, 181, 247, 303
Pines, 252
Pitsoonda, 124, 130, 131 *seq.*
Plague, 133
Platinum, 8, 276
Pokhmelie, 275
Poland, 63, 246
Police, 246, 269
Popular Democrats, 283
Port slang, 204
Post-Impressionism, 128
Poti, 60, 189, 191, 200 *seq.*
Prince, The, 293
Progressives, 283
Pschadsk, 53
Pumpkins, 53
Punch, 102
Pushkin, 105

RADIUM, 273
Railway travelling, 110, 237 *seq.*
Railways, 8, 200, 276
Raskolnikof, 116
Redan, 293
Remizof, 171
Restaurants, 153
Reviewing, 172
Revolutionary movement, 11–12, 62, 230, 279
Right Party, 283
Roads, 164, 182 *seq.*
Rock-roses, 47
Rose, John Baillie, 294
Ross, John, 294
Rostof-on-the-Don, 17 *seq.*, 61, 89, 240
Rtishtchevo, 247
"Rudin," 18, 116
Russia, future of, 209, 221
Russian art, 3, 117 *seq.*
— authors, 28, 98 *seq.*, 124 *seq.*, 171 *seq.*
— diplomacy, 141
— General Election, 281
— newspapers and journalism, 21, 65, 69, 98, 133
— novels, 3, 28, 121, 125, 172
— temperament, 18, 27, 89
— theatre, 3, 25, 106, 120
— War Office, 141
— women, 112, 225, 228, 243, 267, 269
Russkaya Smeesl, 209
Russkoe Bogatsvo, 170
— *Slovo*, 21, 98
Russky Vedimosty, 21, 24, 170, 171
Russo-Japanese War, 4, 141, 220, 299, 302
Rye, 271

SABLEROF, 99–100
St. James's Conference, 303
St. Petersburg, 221
St. Seraphim, 161
St. Sophia, 138
Samara, 250
Samovar, 210
Sanin, 121
Satirikon, 102, 116, 172
Scrawling one's name on rocks and walls, 106
Sea-anemones, 205
Seaside resorts, 41 *seq.*, 71, 87 *seq.*, 113 *seq.*, 190
Secret Doctrine, The, 169
Seerostan, 251–2
Sepulchre, 3
Sevastopol, 41, 99, 289, 293
Shalapin, 5, 120
Shaw, G. B., 121, 127
Shuster, 4

Siberia, 60, 251–2, 277
Singing, 68
Sleeping out, 54, 56, 85, 112, 276
Smolensk Government, 66
Sobinof, 120
Social Democrats, 283
Socialists, 122, 278, 281, 282
Soiman Factory, 276
Sologub, 128, 217, 219
Sometimes River, 51
Sotchi, 41, 72, 80, 83, 87 *seq.*, 190
Spiræa, 47
Staratelni, 268
Steiner, 174
Stolypin, 23, 135, 156
Strikes, 9, 10, 11, 52, 61, 278
Students, 226
Suffragists, 22–3
Sukhum, 41, 130, 164 *seq.*, 180, 190–1
Sun-baths, 44
Sunflowers, 38
Superstitions of the peasantry, 20–1, 161, 212
— of the *intelligentia*, 21
Sweet-peas, 46

TAMBOF, 247
Tartars, 251
Taxes, 200
Tekos, River, 55
Tennyson, 173, 175
Theosophy, 173
Thieves, 29, 85 *seq.*, 139, 143, 240, 245
Three Men, 125
Tiflis, 9
Timber, 51
Tobacco, 49
Tolstoy, 28, 35, 105, 125
Tolsty Meess, 43
Tortoises, 46
Tradesmen, 24, 43, 71, 86
Trafalgar Square, 273
Traffics and Discoveries, 169
Tramp fishermen, 256
Tramp's Sketches, A, 159
Trans-Persian Railway, 5–6
Troitsk, 281
Tryon, Lieut. H., 293
Tsar, The, 113, 162, 223, 279, 282, 284, 303
Tuapse, 41, 61, 70, 145, 190
Turgenev, 105
Turgoak, 252, 271, 273
Turkey, 4, 13, 140, 297
Turkish colonists, 57, 71, 87, 94 *seq.*
Turko-Italian War, 132
Turks, 145, 152, 189, 303

UFA, 250
Undiscovered Russia, 10, 168
Universal Panorama, 65, 69, 273
Ural lakes, 238
Ural Mahometans, 250
— Mountains, 59, 250, 263 *seq.*
Uralsk, 263
Urzhumka, 252

Vagabond in the Caucasus, 168
Vanessa Antiopa, 255
Vasnetsof, 128
Vegetarianism, 44
Vendetta, 139
Verhaeren, 176
Violets, 286
Vladikavkaz, 9, 126
Vodka, 28, 214, 230, 237, 268, 275
Volga, 250
Vologda, 250
Vrubel, 128

WAGES, 9, 26, 28, 61, 72, 267, 272, 277
Warsaw, 245
Waterloo, 294
Watts' "Minotaur," 276
Wellington, Duke of, 294
Wells, H. G., 35, 121, 127, 262
Westminster Gazette, 7
"What does man want?" 270
White River, 151
Wild walnuts, 57, 69, 83
Wilde, Oscar, 126–7, 227
Wilson, Andrew, 293

YALTA, 41, 165, 190
Yeats quoted, 33

ZAMAZAKANTSIANS, 189
Zarathustra, 35
Zlato-Ust, 263
Zugdida, 199

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